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SERMONS.

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SERMONS,

CHIEFLY

ON DEVOTIONAL SUBJECTS.

BY THE

REV. ARCHIBALD BONAR,

MINISTER OF CRAMOND.

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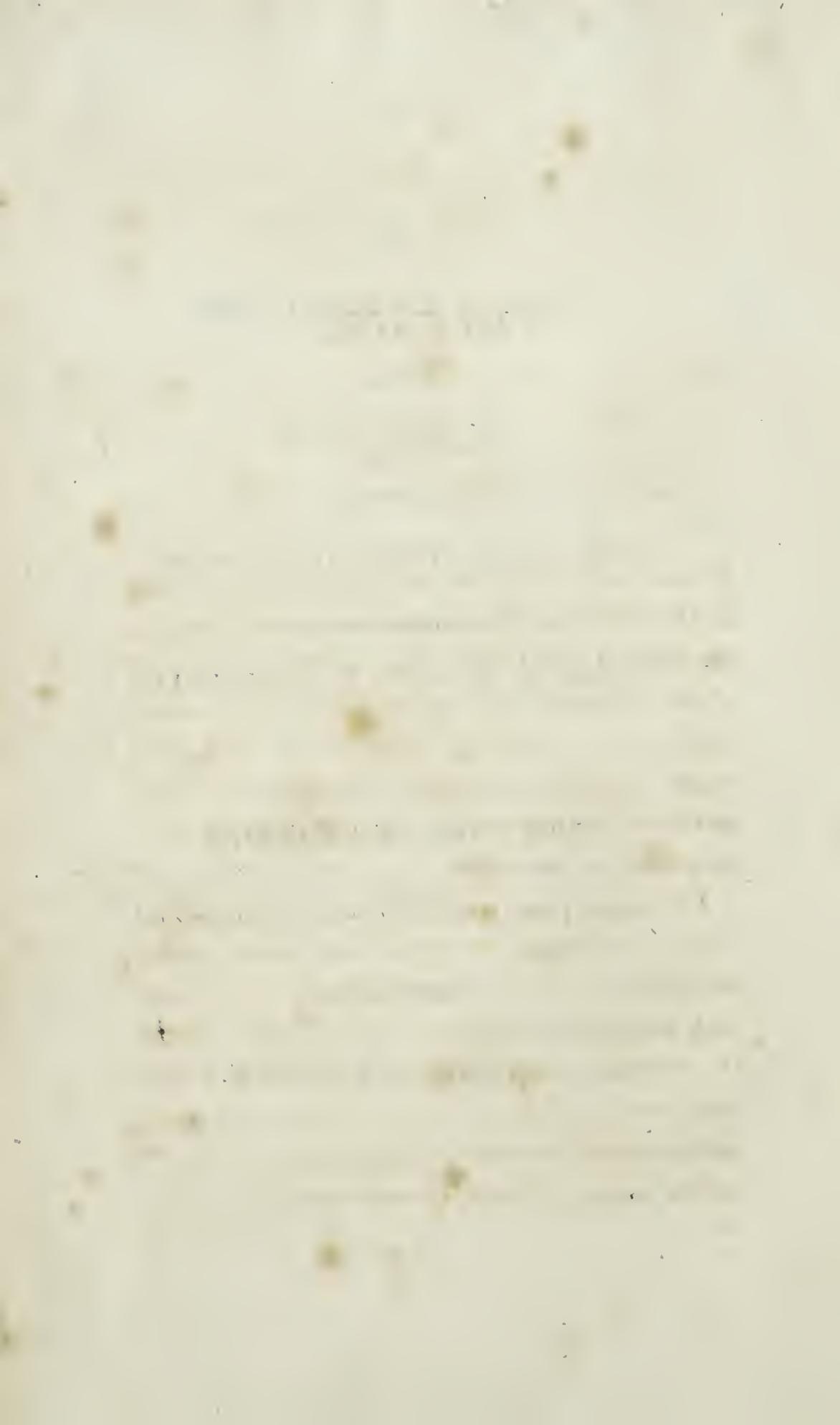
M. OGLE, GLASGOW; AND T. UNDERWOOD,

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TO THE
PARISH OF NEWBURN IN FIFE,
TO THE
CONGREGATION
OF THE
NEW NORTH CHURCH OF GLASGOW,
AND TO THE
PARISH OF CRAMOND IN MID-LOTHIAN,
THIS
VOLUME OF SERMONS
IS, WITH THE GREATEST RESPECT,
INSCRIBED BY
ARCHIBALD BONAR.



PREFACE.

IT was so far from the intention of the Author of the following Discourses, to submit them to the view of the Public, that in the earlier part of his ministry, and vigour of his life, he was afraid that such an intention, if indulged, might lead him to neglect what he owed to the spiritual circumstances of some part of his Congregation.

For some years past, however, it has pleased God to render him unfit for those private pastoral duties which he found pleasant to himself, and, he trusts, not useless to his people. Under the increasing infirmities of age, and of bodily weakness, he will not deny that he felt much satisfaction in revising, and preparing for publication, some of those discourses which he had delivered

delivered to the different Parishes in which he had laboured, as a memorial of the truths which he had maintained, and which he had found fully sufficient to impart strong consolation to his own mind, under the severest trials of life.

The doctrines of Christianity are too often considered as more of a theoretical than a practical nature; and it is too frequently maintained, that Christians rely on the efficacy of their speculative belief, to the exclusion of the works of charity, and labour of love. Irreligious men, having denied the necessity of faith, and boasted of a pretended love to virtue, attempt to shew, that Christians have made faith a substitute for morality. The attempt is as unjustifiable, as the reasoning in support of it is weak. Christianity is founded on faith, and its fruits must be good works. The Author flatters himself, that, however deficient the following discourses may be in other respects, they will be found uniformly and strenuously to recommend a life of virtue and godliness, as the necessary result of our reception of the pure doctrines of our holy religion.

To the young, it is hoped that these Sermons will not be unacceptable. To them, indeed, in

a peculiar manner, are they addressed. The Author is deeply impressed with the importance of an early religious education; and the importance of it is increased in an age, in which, although the grosser vices are disappearing, there is too great a tendency to rob the young of "the hope that is in them," by a gay and seducing ridicule of the most serious truths. The Author is convinced, that the best way of counteracting this is, to impress deeply and solemnly upon the young mind, the vital importance of Christianity. And in the following Discourses, he has made an earnest, and, he fondly hopes, not a useless attempt, to exhibit religion to the young as the one thing needful, and to direct them to lay hold on it, not as a heavy burden, but as a rich prize, and the only sure path to happiness. By his numerous young connections, in particular, he would have these Sermons considered as the best memorial of his affection which he is able to bestow upon them: and would fondly imagine, that when he himself shall be removed from them, they may still regard him as watching over them, and giving them his counsel.

With these intentions. with these hopes, and
with

with many fears, the Author gives this Volume to the Public. The Sermons are not of a controversial nature, because they are not meant so much to prove the truth of Christianity to the understanding, as to strengthen the principles, to comfort the mind, to alarm the conscience, and to amend the conduct. The Author addresses himself to Christians; and if any of these shall be led by these Discourses, to direct their whole soul more perseveringly to the cultivation of the duties of their holy religion, he will think his labour, however reluctant he has been to appear before the Public, most amply repaid.

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SERMON I.

ON THE LOVE OF GOD TO MAN.

I JOHN IV. 8.

God is love.

WHEN we contemplate with admiration the magnificence, variety, and order of the works of God, in heaven and in earth; and when, through them, we endeavour to comprehend their Almighty Maker, we perceive our ignorance of his character, and readily confess our insufficiency to describe his excellence. At the same time, we feel our minds solemnized with these splendid displays of his wisdom, greatness, power, and presence; we rise to the persuasion, that he dwells in light inaccessible and full of glory; and are constrained to exclaim, What is God?

who can know the Lord? who can find out the Almighty to perfection?

But though no mortal powers, nor angelic intelligence, can grasp the full knowledge of the incomprehensible Jehovah; yet the Christian knows so much of this God, as may well silence his fears, support his hopes, and solace his soul. He knows, that God is love; and knowing this, he is instructed in the substance of all that is revealed concerning his nature, character, and conduct. For says our text, and let your heart rejoice in the declaration, "God is love."

Love supposes some object of particular delight, and generally discovers itself by various tokens of regard and complacency. But what, besides himself, can be an object of complacency to the supreme and independent God? What can attract the love of an infinite Being, who is perfectly blessed in himself from everlasting to everlasting? Can man possibly be an object of delight to the Almighty?—man, a frail, dependent, changing creature; nay, a sinful, guilty, rebellious creature? Will God look on him with complacency? will *he* love him? will infinite purity love that which is so polluted?
will

will the sovereign Lord of all love degenerate creatures? Yes; wonder, O heavens! be astonished, O earth!—God is love; and mankind are the happy objects of his love.

I would wish to attempt some plain illustration of this most sublime of all subjects: but the attempt seems aspiring and arrogant; for it is a theme far more fit for the harps of angels in heaven, than for the tongues of men on earth. Its height and depth, and breadth and length, pass all understanding and all research. Yet it becomes us to join with adoring angels, in prying into these reviving truths. Let us then, humbly depending on divine aid, direct our attention, this day, to what, we trust, will engage our admiration through eternal ages—the love of God to man. And,

I. In general, it may be remarked, That the emphatic description in the text refers to the nature, as well as to the operations of God. There are other attributes in Jehovah, besides this attribute of love. He is omniscient, omnipotent, just, true, and glorious in holiness; yet these infinite perfec-

tions of the divine nature are so connected with, and regulated by his love, that they may well be declared as included in it. Thus, our God is infinitely wise, and his omniscience may be denominated the unerring counsels of his sovereign love, devising methods for communicating happiness to myriads of his creatures. His infinite power is the exertion of sovereign love, creating angels and men, upholding them every moment, and crowning them with loving-kindness and tender mercies. His infinite holiness is the purity of sovereign love, turning from whatever is unworthy of God, and pernicious to men. Divine mercy is love pitying and relieving the wretched; divine grace is love saving the lost; and divine patience is love bearing with the weakness of foolish men, and extending protection and blessings to the undeserving.

II. The truth of the assertion, that God is love, appears in his providential dealings with the children of men. Trace his operations in all ages past, in this age, through all nations, to all men, to yourselves in particular; and every dispensation, when properly

perly viewed by the eye of faith, seems encircled with this inscription, "God is love."

When, in the beginning, he formed the world, it was in love, that in all succeeding ages, he might raise into being new generations of rational and immortal creatures; might render them capable of knowing, contemplating, and enjoying him, and fit them for eternal glory.

When, in the wilderness, and from Mount Sinai, he proclaimed his will, and sanctioned his law, it was in love, to shew unto men the path of holiness and happiness, and deter them from the commission of sin, which can only produce inward torment, and outward disorder: "O that we had walked in thy ways!" says the prophet; "then would our peace have flowed as a river!"

When, at sundry times, and in divers manners, our God punished nations, or families, or persons, and poured out his threatened judgments with a fury which no human arm could resist; even these calamities were in love to the many, to prevent the increase of wickedness, and thus prevent the increase of misery; to awaken unthinking men by
the

the terrors of the Lord, that they may turn and live; to maintain good order in his wide government; to protect his faithful subjects, by pleading their cause; and to deter his people from transgression, lest they be punished with the guilty. Thus love appears even in his righteous judgments.

When the God of Israel imparted the Old Testament Scriptures to his ancient people, it was in love, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord, and to guide their feet into the path of peace. And when the gospel-day shone around us, it was in love, to bring immortality to light, and shew us the things which belong to our everlasting salvation.

Though, through the unerring dispensations of Divine Providence, the circumstances of men greatly vary; though some are exalted while others are depressed, and the best of men in all ages have a mingled lot in life; though the joys of prosperity, and the griefs of affliction, alternately succeed each other; yet neither of these are by chance, and both of them are in love. In prosperity, men are the better enabled to honour the Lord with their substance, to
serve

serve him without distracting cares, and to say with the Psalmist, “What shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits?” Adversity, also, may greatly minister to their hope, may shew them that this world is not their rest, and may constrain them to rely more entirely on that heavenly Friend and Saviour, who sticketh closer than any brother.

Thus all the varying events of Providence, whether more general or more personal, are encircled with this inscription, “God is love.”

III. I remark, that in the redemption of mankind, our Lord has displayed the full glories of his love. Here, indeed, language fails, and human thought is lost, in the admiring contemplation of this wondrous theme!

What, but unmerited love, could induce an infinitely holy and offended God to lay aside the terrors of an avenging Judge, to appear in all the amiableness of a forgiving father, and to make the awful tribunal of justice the basis and support of the throne of mercy? Though he created an unresist-
ing

ing world from nothing, must he therefore redeem a guilty world from misery? Though he justly banished fallen men from paradise, can he be expected to exalt these men to glory? Though he has driven apostate angels into the place of perpetual torment, what but love can induce him to raise apostate men to those seats of bliss, which angels had occupied?

O the height and the depth of the redeeming love of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ! Trace back this love to its first manifestation in planning our redemption, and laying our help on One almighty to save. Look forward to the perfecting of this scheme of love, in the glory to be revealed, in the complete, uninterrupted, and everlasting happiness of ten thousand times ten thousand fallen sinners, whom law and justice condemned, and whom the supreme Sovereign of the universe, with infinite honour to his government, might have doomed to unutterable and unending wretchedness, but whom he has resolved to save with an everlasting salvation.

Above all, contemplate the glorious One, who deigned to be the Redeemer of mankind.

kind. He is none other than the Son of God, and brightness of the Father's glory, Emanuel, God manifested in the flesh, seen of men, and crucified on Calvary. An universe could be created with infinite ease, by the word of omnipotent power; but mankind cannot be redeemed from destruction, be saved from their sins, be restored to favour, or be brought to glory, without the shedding of blood, the blood of him in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead. Death is the just, but direful penalty of the law we have broken; and if this penalty is not endured by an all-sufficient substitute, the criminals cannot be released. Therefore Jesus died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. "The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings, to bring many sons and daughters to glory. He became poor, that we, by his poverty, might be made rich."

Finally, contemplate what the redemption, which he purchased with his blood, includes;—pardon of innumerable and infinitely aggravated transgressions; recovery from wretchedness, which must have been eternal; reconciliation and peace with the
God

God of heaven and earth, against whom we had lifted up the arm of rebellion ; restoration to purity and holiness, without which man becomes his own tormentor ; advancement to happiness of the noblest kind, a rational, sublime, and lasting happiness, which is begun in the day of regenerating power, which grows with every growth in grace, and is perfected in the heaven of heavens. For all this bliss, and all these hopes, thou, O man of God, standest an eternal debtor to the riches of redeeming love ! Well, therefore, may the ransomed around the throne, and the saints and sojourners below, unite in one harmonious song, “ God is love.”

Having reminded you that God is love, in his nature, in his dispensations to mankind, and in his method of redeeming perishing sinners, I only add further in the

Last place, That the truth of the assertion in my text appears with peculiar evidence, by tracing the dealings and methods of his grace towards every individual now hearing me, who has interest in the Saviour.

Your experience, O believers in Jesus,
testifies

testifies that God is love. Once you were wandering in forbidden paths, and unwilling to return; once you were lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, and minded only earthly things; once you had only the form of godliness, but not its power, were deceiving your own souls, were speaking peace to yourselves, were righteous in your own eyes, were saying, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." You lay asleep in security, and dreamed of glory, though the heirs of wrath.

But, when the time of favour came, your God awaked you from the fatal delusion. He said unto you, Live. He called you from darkness to his marvellous light, and taught you to choose the things which belong to your future peace.

By wonderful, yet most gracious methods, he has carried on the spiritual and divine life in your soul. Often has he contradicted your selfish desires, and given you most mortifying disappointments in all your hopes of applause, and wealth, and honour. Often has he sent you sickness, oppression, and unkindness, when you looked for strength, success, and friendship. Often has he per-
mitted

mitted you to be tossed with tempests, and not to be comforted by any creature. Yet all is in love, though you think not so ; in richest love to your noblest interests, to prove and humble you, to make you cast your cares on God, to bring you to cleave to him with full purpose of heart, and to lead you, amidst sighs, and tears, and grief, to lift up your eyes, and look beyond time, and see your redemption drawing nigh.

On the other hand, often has he helped you, when laid very low, has brought you from darkness and depths, and has made you joyful, according to the days wherein you had seen grief. Mountains of difficulty have been levelled, fears averted, prayers answered, and you constrained to own, that the Lord hath done great things for you.

Divine love has furnished you means and ordinances for increasing your faith, enlarging your hopes, and enlivening your souls. Perhaps you have not all the means which others enjoy, or which you expected, nor all the continuance of health which would enable you to reap the full comfort of religious ordinances ; yet infinite love sends you the means which you most need,
and

and blesses these means for preserving alive in the soul the good work of grace, amidst all the allurements of the world, all the lusts of the flesh, and all the opposition of the wicked ; nay, perhaps, blesses them more effectually than if you had line upon line, precept upon precept, though, in stead thereof, you have only here a little and there a little.

Besides all this, divine love has taught you to look forward to sublimer ordinances in the heavenly Zion, to nearer and nobler communion in the temple above, where his saints shall serve him, and shall go no more out, and shall, without weariness and ceasing, ascribe blessing, and honour, and glory, to Him who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb that was slain.

Now, O humble believers, unite in your meditation this wondrous chain of mercies to yourselves in particular, flowing from the love of a sovereign God ; his electing you in Christ from everlasting, and inserting your unworthy name in the Lamb's book of life ; his giving you grace to believe in the Saviour, and giving you his Holy Spirit to conduct you to the land of uprightness ;

his

his furnishing you with refreshing ordinances, and rendering them beneficial to your immortal souls ; his visiting you with a mild mixture of trials and mercies, to wean you from the creature, and to elevate your hopes to heaven ; and, finally, his imparting multiplied pardons, glorious triumphs over corruptions, strong consolations in Christ, secret delights in God, growing prospects of glory, and victory over the dread of dying.

Contrast with all this, your own utter unworthiness ; your natural enmity, impenitence, and wretchedness ; your meriting nothing but an eternity of woe ; and yet your being begotten to an inheritance eternal in the heavens :

Then ask, Why was I numbered among the redeemed ? why was I plucked from those flames of wrath, which my sins had kindled ? why am I called from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the fellowship of Christ ? The answer is, “ Even so, O Father ; so it seemed good in thy sight ! ” Or, in the words of the apostle, “ God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved you, even when ye were dead in sins, hath quickened you together

gether with Christ, by whose grace ye are saved : For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Thus the scheme of redemption in general, the purchase of redemption through the Saviour, and the application of that redemption to every individual believer, confirms and illustrates the assertion in my text, that “ God is love.”

Glorious truth ! Let us daily dwell on it in our remembrance. Let us joyfully commemorate the memorials of his richest love, in the sacrament ; and let us plead, that in this solemn commemoration, every grace may be in lively exercise.

FROM this subject, I shall now take occasion to address the word of exhortation to two classes of hearers ; 1. The abusers of divine love ; 2. The happy men, who, drawn by the attractions of the love of God, esteem him above all.

First, Let me address myself to careless sinners, in the language of warning and reproof.

If God is love, not only in his nature, but also in his dispensations to mankind, then how great is your ingratitude, in perverting his acts of kindness into instruments of rebellion against your generous Benefactor!

Various are the methods by which you pervert the riches of divine love. If, when enjoying the bounties and benefits of our God, you forget the Giver of all good; if, when you eat of his bread, and are nourished by his care, when you lie down in safety, and rise up in health, you acknowledge not, with humble gratitude, your dependence on the Almighty; is not this to rob God of the praise of his loving-kindness, and to be unmindful of the Father of mercies, in whose hand your life is, and whose are all your ways?

Again; too often you give to these bounties and benefits, which you derive from God, that affection and delight which belong to him. You admire, and love, and confide in the gifts of Providence, more than in the glorious Giver. You murmur and repine, when, in his righteous indignation, he withdraws what he sees you abusing to his dishonour. You charge him with severity,

verity, for withholding in mercy what you could not enjoy with moderation. You overlook the innumerable comforts still continued, and foolishly forget, that he who hath deprived you of one comfort, might with equal ease have deprived you of your every joy.

Above all, ye careless ones who are at ease in Zion, you insult a loving God, by indulging impenitence and unbelief. He has revealed the great things of his law, and of his gospel; he has, in love, held forth for your acceptance the pearl of great price; but you trample it under foot, and despise the unspeakable gift; you treat with scorn all the methods used for your salvation; nay, you dare to sin with the greatest arrogance and ease, because mercy is revealed, pardon offered, and grace promised.

O foolish and unwise! do you thus requite the Lord? How shall you answer before him for your contempt of his love? or repel the charges brought against you, of goodness despised, grace rejected, patience, mildness, and long-suffering, insulted and abused? Your ingratitude and distrust, your unbelief and disobedience, your determined

rejection of mercy and grace, will surely increase his righteous displeasure, will aggravate your future punishment, and will add new fuel to the flame of your everlasting torment.

But can I suppose, that any now hearing of the riches of divine love and mercy, can obstinately persist in rejecting them? The supposition is too mournful to be indulged. Rather let me urge the consideration of this love, as an argument for your now turning to this merciful God. Draw near to him in faith and prayer. Plead the infinite amiableness of his nature; plead the riches of his redeeming love, manifested through his dear Son; plead the loving-kindness which has led him to spare, and protect, and nourish you until now; and plead what he has, in his love and pity, done for others, as destitute and helpless as you; how he has redeemed many persecuting Sauls, many carnal Manassehs, many a covetous Zaccheus, and many impure Corinthians; how he has called such to the fellowship of Christ Jesus, at the very time when, pleased with their natural state, they were flying from awakening convictions; were desirous that
Jesus

Jesus should not come near, lest he should torment them before the time ; and were willing to live and die, lovers of every pleasure more than lovers of the Saviour.

With these powerful arguments, order your cause before the Lord, pleading for mercy to pardon, and grace to sanctify. That sovereign love which has reached to others in such circumstances, can, with equal ease, reach to you ; can pluck you as brands from the burning ; and can cause you to know, that as in providence, so in redemption, God is love, and has been so to you.

Secondly, Let me now address an exhortation to saints,—to those humble hearers, who, drawn by the attractions of divine love and redeeming grace, are saying in sincerity, Whatever others do, we will serve the Lord.

(1.) Submit, without murmuring, to the various dispensations of his providence. These all partake of his nature ; they are in love to his people, because they come from him who is a God of love to them.

Review and recollect his past dealings, and you will perceive that divine love has regulated

regulated the whole. How often has he multiplied his blessings, when you deserved and dreaded his wrath ! How often have unexpected comforts gladdened your hearts, when you were foreboding days of darkness ! How often has he turned your fears into joys, your wants into plenty, and your trials into victory !

Praise him for the past, and trust him for the future. If God is love, and if you have taken him for your God, and have submitted to his grace and government, you may safely confide in him, whatever may be your affliction. He knows when to withhold, and when to bestow ; and he who gives his people grace and glory, will not withhold any real or necessary good.

He may visit with afflictions, both uncommon and unexpected ; but what can you fear from the hand of infinite love ? That gentle hand will not press too sore upon you ; it will not afflict you too severely. It may administer medicine for your health ; it may even correct for your undutifulness ; but still it is the hand of a loving Father ; and while it chastens for your profit, it at the same time wards off those fiery darts of Satan,

Satan, which would prove too agonizing for your frail spirits, and also heals the painful wounds which sin has made.

Though, therefore, in the despondency of your spirits, you sometimes say that your trials are severe, yet if this God, this faithful, unchanging God, is your God, and you his real obedient people, you will, sooner or later, perceive so much love in these trials, that you would not, for a world, have wanted one ingredient in the bitterest of them. “Why art thou then cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance *.”

(2.) Love this God with supreme regard and gratitude. He is unspeakably amiable in himself, and has shewn distinguished regard to you; because the infinite perfection of his nature is united with tenderest compassion and ineffable goodness.

What is it which God has not done for you, O believer in Jesus? He formed you from nothing; he honoured you with rational

* Psal. xlii. 5.

tional and immortal souls ; he gave the Son of his love to redeem you, when lost ; he revealed his great salvation by his inspired word ; he applied that salvation by his Spirit ; he became your God in covenant, and your portion in the land of the living ; and he opened to your view the prospect of everlasting glory. All this he has done for you, when you had nothing to attract his regard ; when you deserved nothing, and had reason to expect nothing, but condemnation and misery.

Shall you not then love him, who first loved you, and who has graciously promised to his people, that neither height, nor depth, nor life, nor death, shall separate them from his love ?

“ O love the Lord, all ye his saints !”
 Let the flame burn brighter and brighter, until it has consumed your dross, and purified all your affections. His love to you lays you under the most endearing, and powerful, and constant obligations to love him more than all ; to glorify him in soul, body, and spirit ; to say daily to him, in warmest gratitude, Whom have we in heaven or earth like unto thee ? Thou art
 fairer

fairer than the children of men, altogether lovely and precious ! Bind us closer to thyself ; banish every rival ; possess our thoughts, our wishes, and our hopes ; and henceforth let our words and actions testify our gratitude, our admiration, and our delight in thee.

What sorrow, also, and humiliation should fill our souls, when we reflect how little we love God, or praise him for his goodness, or meditate on his excellence, or live to his glory !

(3.) Imitate this God of love, and seek, through grace, to resemble your heavenly Father.

He is kind, even to the evil and unthankful. He pardons the fiercest of his foes, and extends his goodness and grace to the most unworthy.

Should not this teach us to forgive our enemies, to do good even to them who hate, and curse, and persecute us ; and thus to overcome evil with good ?

But divine love is particularly manifested to believers in Jesus. Though often a poor and afflicted people, they are the excellent ones of the earth, and the Lord delights in them.

them. Let us also love the brethren. Instead of despising the saints, however mean, poor, and humble, let us highly honour them whom God has honoured, so as to make them the partakers of his grace, and the heirs of his glory. Let us shew our love to them as God has shewn his love to us, by relieving their distresses, by comforting their drooping minds, by bearing with their weakness, by befriending them when destitute, admonishing them when wandering, fortifying them when tempted, and encouraging them when tried and afflicted. Thus, let us shew ourselves the children of our heavenly Father, by doing good to all, especially such as are of the household of faith.

Lastly, Is that glorious Jehovah, to whom you have devoted your hearts and lives, indeed the God of love? Then recommend him as such to your friends and families while you are on earth, and long to be with him in the heaven of heavens.

This is your delightful work, and should be your daily study, to proclaim and extol his mercy, kindness, and grace, that others, as well as you, drawn by the attractions of
his

his character, may love and esteem him above all.

And while you thus seek to commend and honour him upon earth, look forward, with hope and eager desire, to the blessed period when you shall behold the full evidence of his love to you, enjoy its most glorious effects, and dwell for ever in the immediate presence of this God of love.

O how lovely and amiable does he appear, when we contemplate him in his sanctuary, and at his table! How lovely, when he manifests himself to his people as he does not to the world! How lovely in the hours of secret, blessed, and near fellowship! What, then, must be his loveliness, beauty, and brightness, when the clouds of mortality no longer veil him from our sight, when we are enabled to see him as he is, and when we can tell to listening angels, This is our God, we waited for him; he hath come and saved us, therefore we will rejoice before him with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Amen.

SERMON II.

ON PROVIDENCE.

REVELATIONS XIX. 6.

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia ; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

ALTHOUGH nothing more had been revealed in this inspired volume, than the certainty, extent, and rectitude of God's providential dominion ; although the sacred scriptures had limited their discoveries to this one truth celebrated in my text ; even this would have furnished a powerful argument for searching the scriptures, and making them our constant companion in the house of our pilgrimage.

There

There is something so satisfying to the mind in having infallible authority for the doctrine of a Divine Providence; it is so suited to the wishes and wants of all men; so soothing in the seasons of sorrow; so supporting in the prospect of approaching difficulties, or of dreaded dangers, that it may well constrain the humble worshippers of the Almighty to join with the happier assemblies above, in saying, with ever new and growing gratitude, "Allelujah! let us be glad and rejoice, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

When this sublime sentiment is engraven on our heart, we meditate without dismay on all the astonishing things which are accomplishing among the nations. Undaunted at what the people may devise, we look by faith to him who is invisible; and we hear him saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." We behold this glorious Potentate, seated on his throne of justice and judgment, ordering aright the lot of his people; distributing to all men a just proportion of good and evil; putting down one, and exalting others; ensnaring wickedness in its own devices, or promoting
righteousness

righteousness by the stratagems used for its destruction; sending abroad judgments through many lands, or mercifully calming the tumults of the nations. Thus, in revolving what has been, or now is, or what may be hereafter, we triumph in the persuasion, that thine, O Lord, is the kingdom, and power, and glory.

The consolation arising from a firm belief of the important doctrine contained in this text, is greatly heightened to real Christians, by their knowing that he to whom the allelujahs of heaven are addressed, and who reigneth King for ever, is that very Prince of peace on whom their hopes are built, and whom they supremely love; who died to redeem them from their sins by his own blood; who is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, having all power in heaven and earth; and on whose vesture is this name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords. It is this which confirms their faith of all things working together for their good; which gives energy to their hope of safety and protection in troublous times; and which yields to their minds unspeakable serenity amidst all changes and revolutions.

The

The text leads our believing contemplations to the employments and joys of the heavenly inhabitants ; it introduces us to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of the just made perfect ; it represents all the ransomed above as worshipping before the throne of God and the Lamb ; it elevates our devotion, by declaring the cause of their joy ; and it invites us to bear our part in their celestial songs, and, with our feeble notes of praise, to celebrate the glory, the greatness, and the grace, of Zion's Almighty King ; for thus you read from the 4th to the 8th verse : “ And the four and twenty elders, and the four beasts, fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen ; allelujah. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Allelujah ; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him ; for the marriage of the
Lamb

Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”

Christian brethren, let us for a moment forget that we are on earth, and let us joyfully listen to these seraphic strains above! Gabriel tunes his golden harp, and gladly sings, “ Alleluja; the Lord reigneth, let the earth be glad, and the multitude of the isles rejoice.” Abraham, and the venerable band of patriarchs, re-echo, Alleluja; he whom we saw in vision, and whom we foretold as the Shiloh, the Prince of peace, and the King of righteousness; he reigneth; the government is upon his shoulders; hosanna in the highest. David and all the prophets join the angelic hosts, Alleluja; the Lord reigneth; his arm and power shall reach afar, shall extend from sea to sea, from the rising sun to where it sets; men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed. Martyrs and apostles shout aloud with joy, Alleluja; the Lord Redeemer reigns; he hath all power in heaven and earth; to him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess; and the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our God, and of his Christ.

Let

Let us join these heavenly lays, saying, Live and reign, wondrous King of glory; be thou Lord of all; let thy kingdom come, and let thy will be done on earth; and let every creature ascribe blessing, dominion, and glory, to the Lord God omnipotent, who was, and is, and is to come.

In farther discoursing on this portion of scripture, it is proposed, through divine assistance, I. To speak of the wide extent of Jehovah's government; "The Lord reigneth." II. To remind you of the essential properties of his providence, towards mankind in general, and his redeemed in particular. III. To direct you to that improvement of this extensive subject, which is suggested by the text and context.

I. For exciting the ardour of your devotion, and leading you to join with understanding in the song of the adoring hosts above, let us first contemplate the wide extent of the omnipotent Jehovah's government and dominion. He reigneth, says our text; or, as it is expressed in the Psalms, "He hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom

kingdom ruleth over all *.” Memorable words ! commanding at once our trust, submission, obedience, and joy. Independent of all created aid, he himself has prepared, or reared, and established his throne ; so that it cannot be shaken by all the furious attacks of earth or hell. This throne of God is in the heaven of heavens ; there he reigns in royal majesty ; and from thence extends his sovereign authority to all around and all beneath ; to all his creatures and all their actions.

His kingdom ruleth over all ; over angels of light ; over fiends of darkness ; and over mankind of every kindred, nation, and language.

First, Let us meditate on the government and providence of our God with respect to holy and happy angels in heaven. Here the aid of faith is peculiarly necessary ; for these happy spirits, being free from the cumbersome load of mortal bodies, are invisible to human view ; so that nothing less than the belief of what scripture reveals, can make

us

* Psal. ciii. 19.

us acquainted with those holy and happy spirits.

This sacred volume testifies to us all that we need to know concerning their nature, number, and employment.

In scripture they are styled the hosts of heaven, an innumerable company of angels, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. These celestial spirits are continually employed in ascribing glory to God in the highest, hearkening to his commands, and doing his will. With unceasing rapture, they celebrate the riches of redeeming love; with unwearied alacrity, they minister to the heirs of salvation, and fulfil whatever is the pleasure of their Almighty King.

O joyful discovery! By faith we behold myriads of superior intelligent creatures, perpetually praising and serving the God whom we serve. Say not, then, O humble worshipper! that you are left alone and unsupported in your regard for the honour of religion; that you have none to encourage your zeal for God, and none to accompany you in the path of obedience. Far from being alone in your zeal for the glory of

God, an innumerable company of angels join with you in the same service ; like you, but in a manner vastly superior, they contemplate, and admire, and worship, and obey.

These countless hosts of angels, excelling all other intelligent created beings in wisdom and strength, nearly allied to God, completely blessed in his presence, and enjoying constant intercourse with their Maker, are the willing subjects of his kingdom and government, are under his sovereign dominion, are ever obedient to his royal command, and gladly serve him with all their active and extensive powers.

They are often employed by him on important errands to the sons of men, either for the punishment of iniquity, or for the joy of the righteous. When the first-born of Egypt were to be cut off in one night, an angel is commissioned on that memorable service ; and when the army of Sennacherib was justly doomed to immediate destruction, angels from heaven were made the ministers of divine indignation.

On the other hand, these benevolent beings were employed to deliver Lot from
Sodom ;

Sodom ; to comfort Jacob at Bethel ; to strengthen Elisha at Dothan ; to inform the watchful shepherds at Bethlehem, that a Saviour was born, even Christ the Lord. They willingly ministered to this Saviour in the days of his sorrow ; they adorned the triumphs of his exaltation, when he ascended up on high, leading captivity captive. In all this, they fulfilled the pleasure of him who is the Lord of hosts, who hath established his throne in the heavens, and who doth his will amongst the armies above.

Daily do angels minister to every heir of salvation : they rejoice at his conversion ; they witness his devotions ; they mark with applause his Christian conduct ; they guard his midnight hours ; they attend his tottering steps in the days of his declining health ; they surround his dying bed, and introduce him to the world of happy spirits, and hail him in welcome acclamations to the mansions of eternal bliss.

Such is the government of our God over holy angels : they are subjects of his kingdom ; they obey what he commands, and serve him with perfect love and perfect joy ;

they are immutably confirmed in a state of unspeakable happiness; and they minister to the heirs of salvation by ways unknown to us. Alleluja; the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and is King of glory; many angels are round about his throne, and ascribe blessing and dominion to him who liveth for ever, and to the Lamb that was slain.

Let us next turn our attention to the government of our God over the powers of darkness; and let us behold, with adoring joy, how their malignity is restrained, how their furious rage is bounded, and all their stratagems turned into artillery against themselves.

These wretched spirits were once angels of light; and continued for a time perfect in wisdom, purity, and bliss.

But, proudly aspiring to be independent of the God who made them, and ungratefully rebelling against his authority, they brought upon themselves wretchedness and ruin; were banished from the heavenly mansions, cast into the place of torment, and doomed to irrecoverable vengeance.

Ever since their apostacy and condemnation,

tion, they have been the determined foes of God and of righteousness; and never do they experience one moment's mitigation of their unutterable anguish, except, perhaps, when hoping to thwart the designs of the Almighty, and when endeavouring to prevent the children of men from doing the will of our heavenly Father.

For holy ends they have been permitted, in the unsearchable wisdom of God, to set up an interest and kingdom, in opposition to the cause of our God and his Christ. With unwearied vigilance, and unceasing stratagem, they endeavour to entice mankind from the path of commanded duty; and, alas! their success in every age is marvellous and mournful. Many are led captive by the snares of these malignant spirits; many are the children of the evil one; many believe and obey Satan rather than God, doing the works of their father the devil, resembling him in evil dispositions, and uniting with him in opposing the interests of holiness.

But our Almighty Lord reigneth, and his kingdom shall prevail; he who was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, who,

who, even in his state of humiliation, dispossessed legions, and delivered men from the cruel influence of Satan; this Almighty King of Zion holds Satan bound in chains, and says to the furious tempter, Hitherto shalt thou go, but no farther; here shall thy proud rage be stayed. This exalted Lord of lords governs the invisible worlds, and has the keys of death and hell; he beholds all the stratagems of the artful seducer of souls; he gives his people strength to resist the devil, to stand in the evil day, to vanquish the powers of darkness, and to be more than conquerors through the grace of Christ.

Though, in many nations, and in many hearts, the empire of Satan seems so firmly established that it can never be overthrown, yet he whose kingdom ruleth over all, shall arise and plead his own cause; he will make the nations obedient to his word; will deliver an elect world from the bondage of the great adversary; and will bring Jews and Gentiles, Barbarians and Scythians, bond and free, to the clear light and glorious liberty of the children of God.

Ere long the Omnipotent Lord of Zion
will

will take to himself his great power, and the accuser of the brethren will be cast out ; ere long shall come that tremendous day, to which Satan looks forward with agonizing horror ; that day of final judgment, when his total overthrow shall be accomplished ; when he shall be constrained to bow to the direful, irreversible sentence of never-ending misery.

Such is the mysterious and righteous government of God respecting the devil and his angels ; they are now permitted to tempt, and seemingly to triumph, that the wisdom, and power, and grace of the great God our Saviour, may appear the more illustrious, in translating careless, captive sinners, from darkness to light ; in enabling feeble, timid believers, to fight and conquer ; in extending the triumphs of the gospel through those lands where Satan has his seat ; and in hastening on the blissful period, when a spiritual, holy, and everlasting kingdom shall be established. “ Allelujah ; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth :” True and righteous are his judgments ; he shall judge the great deceiver which did corrupt the earth, and shall

shall cast him into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, where the smoke of his torment shall ascend for ever and ever.

Having reminded you that the dominion of the glorious Jehovah extends to the host of heaven, and to the fiends of hell; let us now turn our attention to his government of the children of men on earth.

Here a most rich, varied, and wide scene opens before us! involved, indeed, with clouds and darkness, if viewed only by the dim eye of natural reason, but bright and joyful, when contemplated through the light of revelation, and by the eye of faith. Then we can clearly perceive that God is King of all the earth, and can behold the finger of the Almighty regulating every motion in the complicated machinery of the providence of the Lord God omnipotent.

By him kings reign, princes decree justice, and kingdoms rise and fall; he lays low the proud monarch of Egypt, and sends the impious king of Babylon to feed with the beasts of the field; he crowns with victory the arms of Cyrus, and says concerning him,
Thou

Thou shalt do all my pleasure, though thou hast not known me.

Those astonishing changes in empires, which seem to arise merely from the fury of the people, or the ambition of princes, are under the controul and influence of him who sits on the floods, and directs the storm; who mocks the projects of princes, and laughs to scorn the monarchs of the earth; who defeats the enterprises of the crafty, and makes his people's fiercest foes the instruments of safety and good to his chosen! Alleluja; the Lord reigneth; thine, O Lord, is the kingdom, power, and glory; thou changest the times and the seasons; thou dashest into dishonour the towering hopes of the mighty; and thou exaltest to victory the defeated captives doomed to destruction. All kings of the earth shall bow down before thee, all kindreds of the people shall do thee homage.

As our God is King of kings, so is he the refuge of the needy, and the Father of the fatherless, in his holy habitation. His care is not confined to the mighty and the noble; he pleads the cause of the destitute, he delivers the oppressed from

from deceit and violence, and is the stay of him whom no man regards; he beholds the sorrowful, pities the afflicted, and overlooks not a blind Bartimeus, a wretched Lazarus, or even a starving prodigal.

Thus princes and people, the mighty and the mean, are in the hands of the Lord, and his most righteous government extends to all ranks, kindreds, and nations.

But let us come nearer home; let us behold the text verified in our own several situations; and let us admire that Providence which has cared for us from our earliest infancy, and has so graciously ordered all our concerns.

Whence comes it that you are the children, not of heathen idolaters, but of Christian parents? To whom belongs the praise of all the merciful circumstances relating to your birth, and infancy, and childhood? and how is it, that amidst the thousands who die in early days, you have been spared in the land of the living, and been blessed with health, and food, and raiment? To all such inquiries you reply in the language of scripture, “ Thy hands, O Lord, have made and fashioned me; thou hast held me

up

up from the womb ; thou art my trust from my youth ; my praise shall ever be of thee.”

But the progress of life, as well as its beginning, is from the Lord. He hath nourished and brought us up as children ; hath made us dwell in safety, and kept our life from the power of the grave ; he hath healed our distresses, heard our supplications, and crowned us with tender mercies.

Our various situations in life, our worldly calling, our success in business, our kindred and abode, though seemingly accidental, are ascribed in scripture to the care, the guidance, and government of Divine Providence. The great Lord of all appoints our station, assigns our work, and gives to all, life, breath, and all things.

Look back upon your past days ; remember the way by which Jehovah hath led you ; and behold him thwarting your own plans ; disappointing the schemes of your kindest friends ; raising up unexpected benefactors ; making cross occurrences productive of much benefit ; and rendering seemingly accidental interviews the origin of interesting events in life.

But here let me particularly remind you,
that

that in his all-governing providence, he has peculiarly regarded your spiritual interests. To him you owe those distinguished religious privileges with which you are favoured, and those precious means of grace to which you have free access; those pious parents, who train you up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; those faithful pastors, who warn you to flee from wrath; and those kind monitors, who beseech you to shun the path in which destroyers go. To him you owe the lively oracles of truth, the peaceful sanctuary, the reviving sacrament of the Supper, the liberty of prayer, the communion of saints, and the dispensation of word and ordinances.

He has not dealt thus with every one; it therefore well becomes you to adopt the animated language of the text, ascribing grateful hosannahs to the Lord God omnipotent, whose much indebted pensioners you are; and saying, in sincerity of heart, Here we raise our Ebenezer; for hitherto hath the Lord helped us, and he hath done all things well.

This acknowledgement you may thankfully adopt, not only concerning the evident mercies

mercies already mentioned, but also with respect to the adverse circumstances in your lot. Your afflictions spring not from the dust, nor befall you by chance; they were sent in mercy, and wisely timed to humble and to try you; to chastise your offences, and reclaim your wandering steps; to discover and remove your secret corruptions; to try and improve your spiritual graces; to increase your faith; and to exercise your submission and patience.

But this should lead forward our meditations to the second subject proposed for illustration, viz. the glorious properties of our God's providential administration. This, with the practical improvement, will furnish matter for a second discourse on this text.

SERMON III.

ON PROVIDENCE.

REVELATIONS XIX. 6.

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia ; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

HAVING, in the former discourse on this text, spoken to you concerning the wide extent of Jehovah's dominion, we now proceed to enumerate some of the essential properties of his providential administration towards mankind in general, and to his own renewed adopted children in particular.

The word Providence suggests two ideas intimately connected together, namely, preservation

servation and government. First, By the providence of God, we mean his preserving men in life, and continuing their power of acting, so long as he sees it expedient to make them instrumental in fulfilling his plans on earth; and then removing them in his appointed season, and raising up others in their room: "The Lord raiseth up, and putteth down; he wounds and heals; he kills or keeps alive. He hath appointed a time for man on earth, and hath determined the number of his months." Sometimes, indeed, men are said to die before their time; this only means, that they die before the period to which, in human probability, they might have lived, but not before the period known to our God, and permitted by him. Sometimes their days are shortened by intemperance or vice, by frenzy or violence, by famine or war; so that we bewail them as dying an untimely death: but this is ordained of God for judgment, or correction; for punishment of sin, or warning to others, or for other important purposes, to be revealed in the day of the manifestation of all things.

Besides the preservation of man so long

as

as is consistent with the will of God, the term Providence refers to his moral government, as an almighty King and righteous Judge; his giving laws to mankind, and a revelation of his will, requiring their unre-served compliance; threatening to punish the disobedient, and promising to recompense the dutiful, either externally or mentally, either in this world or the next. When, therefore, we speak of the providence of God, we include both ideas,—the preservation and the government of mankind.

The dispensations of Divine Providence partake of every attribute essential to the omnipotent Lord who rules the nations; like him, they are all wise, holy, just, and good.

Without entering on this extensive field, I shall only at present direct your attention to the sovereignty, perfect rectitude, and uniform tendency to promote the interests of the adorable Redeemer.

I. In his dispensations, our God acts as an independent Sovereign, carrying into certain accomplishment the purposes he has formed,

formed, and fulfilling them in his own way, and at his own time.

We are the clay, and he is the independent former of all things; we have nothing but what we have received from him; we are therefore not our own, but his, and unto him belongeth the sovereign right of dealing with us according to his pleasure. This he claims as his glorious prerogative; therefore he tells the children of men, that his counsel shall stand; and he requires them to be still, and know that he is God.

Yet it is not the sovereignty of an unrighteous ruler which he exercises, but of an unerring and gracious Lord, who, though he gives not now any account of his matters to men, yet assures them, that a period is hastening on, when assembled worlds will, from full conviction, universally acknowledge, "Great and marvellous are all thy works, Lord God of hosts! just and true are all thy ways, O thou King of saints!"

This sovereignty of our God, in his providential administration, appears chiefly in three things: In choosing whom he will to stations of usefulness; in working with or

without means; in ordering all things for his own glory.

Much of the sovereignty of Divine Providence appears in the selection of persons to particular stations and services. Why was Aaron and his family fixed in the priesthood of Israel, when Moses and his family seemed far more deserving of that highest honour? Why was the stripling David appointed to sway the sceptre in Judah, rather than his other brethren, who had been inured to the labours of the camp? Why was Paul preferred before his instructor Gamaliel, in the divine commission to testify of Jesus? And why were the twelve poor fishermen called from their nets to the dignity of apostleship, rather than Nicodemus, or Lazarus, or the ruler Jairus, or the humble centurion, or many others who followed Jesus in the days of his humiliation? All must be resolved into the good pleasure of him who chooses and qualifies whom he will for the sufferings and services to which they are called: Allelujah; the Lord reigneth, and the hearts of all are in his hand; and he turneth them as the rivers of water, according to his pleasure.

Again;

Again ; our God often manifests the sovereignty of his providence, by the unlikely means through which he accomplishes important events. The daughter of Pharoah is filled with compassionate attachment to Moses, and is constrained to rear him, though a Hebrew, and though condemned by her father. The slender rod in the hand of Moses divides the Red Sea at the divine appointment ; brings streams of water from the flinty rock ; and sends the direful plagues on Egypt. The sling and stone of David prove more effectual than the sword, and spear, and strength of Goliah. The strong walls of Jericho are demolished by the mere sounding of trumpets at the divine command. Thus, by the insufficiency of the means, God discovers that the efficacy is from himself alone ; that with him all things are easy ; and that no difficulty should stagger the faith of his people.

But sometimes our God displays his sovereignty, by disdaining the use of means, and by giving deliverance when all human aid had proved unavailing. Lazarus sickens, dies, and is buried, ere the Saviour spake

the reviving word, “ Lazarus, arise *.” Scarce had the Israelites escaped Egypt, when inevitable destruction seemed to threaten them; the Red Sea before; Pharoah and his host behind; the rocks, and beasts of prey, on every hand; yet then it was that Israel’s God wrought their deliverance, made even the waters a wall of defence, and the deeps a path for his chosen.

Finally, The sovereignty of God appears in restraining the purposes of the wicked, or changing their counsels. Laban pursued Jacob with malignant intent to molest the pious patriarch; yet God so touched his heart, that no sooner does he meet Jacob, than his wrath calms, and all his violence turns into mildness †. The furious Philistines never once attacked Judea in those defenceless seasons when all the males were worshipping at Jerusalem, and when the borders of their country might easily have been pillaged. When the banished tribes of Israel were to be delivered from their long captivity, the mind of Cyrus is unexpectedly turned to befriend and restore them.

When

* John xi. 44.

† Gen. xxxiii.

When Paul's services were deemed expedient for promoting the spread of the gospel, his heart is changed from a persecutor to a disciple, so that he longs to preach the faith which once he sought to destroy.

II. Another property of the divine administration is, its perfect rectitude and purity: "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."

Nothing seems more opposite to this than the general aspect of events, especially the evident abounding of iniquity, and the triumphs of the wicked; sincere piety often lies neglected in obscure retreats; often are the godly in Christ Jesus oppressed by persecution, and permitted to struggle with want, and pain, and reproach, and the miseries of adversity; while sinners prosper, and ungodly men are crowned with honours, wealth, influence, and applause.

This excites discouragement and doubt in the mind of the serious, and tempts them to murmur against Providence in their desponding seasons: Hath God forsaken the earth? cares he not what befalls his children? how can he be just in all his ways, and yet the righteous suffer such hard things? Thus spake

spake even David in his haste, when he saw the ungodly spreading as the green bay-tree; and when he meditated on the many sorrows of the saints, he was envious at the foolish, and his heart was disquieted. Jeremiah, in like manner, fretfully asks of God, Wherefore do the wicked prosper, and take root, and flourish? and Malachi laments that Israel hardened their hearts, by saying one to another, Every one that doth evil is exalted, and where is the God of judgment?

How unbecoming is this language! What though the great Lord of all has given this earth to the sons of men, nay, to ungodly men; what though they have more than heart can wish, and are not plagued as other men, and have no bands in their death! yet all their portion is in this world, and their life is a vapour, and this poor portion soon vanishes away; their prosperity itself often proves a snare, and accelerates their future and everlasting misery.

The sorrows of the saints, on the other hand, shall soon be exchanged for unutterable and everlasting joy. Even in the present life, their tribulations are sweetened by the promises of the well-ordered covenant,
by

by the prospects of future glory, and by the solacing communications of the divine presence: their God afflicts them for their profit, to restore their souls, and revive their longings for heaven. Though it may seem a strong assertion, yet it is confirmed by daily facts, that the continuance of sin in the world finally issues in the manifestation of divine glory; the glory of divine power, in setting restraining bounds to iniquity; the glory of divine holiness, in making sin its own punishment; and the glory of divine grace, in providing an all-sufficient salvation.

Thus justice and holiness, no less than power and sovereignty, are essential properties of the divine administration and government.

III. The dispensations of Providence in this world are all subservient to the enlargement of the glorious Redeemer's kingdom in the world.

This opens a bright scene to the observing Christian; for to him the records of the past give strength to the prospects of the future. Look back to what has passed away,

away, that thus you may learn what shall be hereafter.

The confusion of tongues at the building of the tower of Babel, produced the peopling of those regions which have since been brought to the fellowship of the gospel. The calling of Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees was the origin of that nation, amongst whom the Saviour was to be manifested. The bringing Israel from Egypt to Canaan ; delivering them from many dangers ; raising them into a powerful nation ; keeping them a distinct people amidst all their dispersions ; and at last causing the sceptre of Judah to depart, and erecting the Roman standard in Zion ; all this series of events was calculated, with unerring wisdom, to make Messiah the expectation and desire of many nations. The rise, and progress, and decline of Daniel's four mighty monarchies, prepared the way of the Lord, and promoted the reception of his gospel. The blood of martyrs in early ages proved the seed of the church ; and the persecutions of heathen tyrants strengthened and extended the kingdom of the Prince of peace.

From these past operations of Providence,
take

take encouragement concerning the future; and behold all events working together for good to the church of Christ.

Our Almighty Redeemer has founded a kingdom on earth, a spiritual, enduring, and peaceful kingdom; essentially different from all human governments; not regulated by worldly maxims, but by the righteous laws of God; not supported by worldly power, but by the special care of the Lord God omnipotent; not extending its triumphs by violence and war, but by the resistless energy of the truth, and by the power of the gospel. This spiritual kingdom of Christ shall ere long spread amongst all nations, and shall prevail against the stratagems used to impede its progress. The period is hastening on, when the light of gospel-truth shall break forth with meridian brightness; when the glory of the gospel-church shall shine from the rising sun to where he sets; when all ends of the earth shall call Jesus the blessed One, and all nations shall see the salvation of our God.

These awful commotions among the kingdoms of this world, which now astonish and alarm the profoundest politicians, are hastening

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ing forward this most glorious of all revolutions, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in, and when all Israel shall be saved.

Already is the pride of Antichrist laid low, his delusions detected, his policy reviled; his interests opposed, his throne tottering, and his wide dominion diminishing daily. Already the King of Zion arises to plead his own cause; he girds his sword upon his thigh; he goeth forth from conquering to conquer; he leads captivity captive, and takes to himself his great power, and shall reign.

As the general operations of Divine Providence in the world are promoting the progress of the gospel through the nations, so the particular dispensations of Providence to individual believers, are overruled by unerring wisdom and infinite love, to advance the kingdom of grace in their souls, to humble them under the mighty hand of God, to reconcile them to his salutary discipline, to teach them daily watchfulness and self-denial, and to make his righteousness, and grace, and salvation, and promises, more precious to their souls.

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Those very events in the church of Christ, which seem most likely to mar the interests of his kingdom, are conducive to its welfare. The temporary declensions, and mournful backslidings of real Christians, excite to greater earnestness, humility, and watchfulness, their fellow-travellers Zionward, and themselves also in future days. The final apostacy of mere nominal Christians separates the chaff from the wheat, and evinces the necessity of more religion than an unavailing name, or an outward form. Even the death of eminently faithful men awakes from their slumbers the sluggish in Zion, and rouses them to far more boldness, activity, and zeal, than ever they were supposed to possess.

Allelujah ; the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and the children of men are the instruments in his hands of accomplishing his unerring purposes. Allelujah ; the Almighty Redeemer is King of kings, and King of saints ; every nation and every heart is under his sovereign controul ; he hath all power in heaven and in earth ; therefore his kingdom shall come, and his name be hallowed, and his will shall be done

done on earth : Allelujah ; say among the heathen, Immanuel reigns ! He is a great God and a great King ; the strength of hills is his ; the deep places of the earth are in his hands : Let the heavens be glad, and the earth rejoice ; let the sea roar, and the fields be joyful ; for the Lord cometh to judge the earth with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

HAVING reminded you what is implied in this triumphant song, we would now close the discourse with exhorting you to make some proper improvement of this delightful subject.

1. Doth the Lord God omnipotent reign ? and are you the subjects of his providential kingdom ? Then be it your care, to think, and speak, and act, as becomes his creatures ; as the dependent pensioners on his bounty, and as the dutiful subjects of his administration. Acknowledge his sovereign dominion over you, and his unalienable right to guide, direct, and govern you and yours : be satisfied with the stations he assigns, and fulfil the duties of these stations according to the unerring commandments of
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his blessed word ; abound more and more in the various important duties which become dependent, much indebted creatures ; in thanksgiving, gratitude, trust, obedience, submission, worship, and devotion. Be it your determination in all things to do the will of God ; and be it your desire to walk before him unto all well pleasing.

Dearly beloved hearers ! it well becomes you to love with all the ardours of supreme affection, and to adore with reverential awe, that God of universal providence who hitherto has dealt so graciously with you. Though he inherits the praises of eternity, and the adorations of the countless myriads in heaven ; though his greatness is unsearchable, and his glory past finding out ; though he is infinitely, independently, and for ever blessed in himself ; yet hath he deigned to care for you, ever since you had a being ; to nourish you as his children ; to guard you from numberless dangers ; and to crown your daily lot with numberless mercies.

Ascribe, therefore, to him the unrivalled praise of the mercies, deliverances, and comforts, which you have received ; trace up your enjoyments to himself, the Giver of all
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good; and say unto God, What have we which we have not received? In thee we live, and from thee descends every blessing.

2. While praising the Lord God omnipotent for all the comforts of life you hitherto have enjoyed, entrust also to him all your future interests; for he justly claims the right of imparting mercies in his own time and manner; of turning the shadows of the evening into a joyful morning; and making the valley of Achor, or grief, a door of hope and joy.

Cast, therefore, all your cares on that God of providence who hath cared for you; and daily commit your way to him through the supplications of faith, and through humble confidence in his power and promises: trust in the Lord at all times, for with him is everlasting strength.

Yet let not this trust lead you to neglect the diligent use of lawful means for your prospering in the world; expect not success in your schemes, when doing evil that good may come, or when walking contrary to the will of God. Delight yourselves in him, and wait on him in the path of duty; for
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with infinite ease he can accomplish the desires of your heart.

5. Is there a kingdom of grace on earth, as well as a kingdom of providence? Then be it your highest concern to know if you are the real subjects of this spiritual kingdom. Are you reconciled to God through Christ? have you submitted to the glorious Redeemer's righteousness, and government, and disposal? are you going up through the wilderness, leaning on him whose name and memorial is King of kings, and Lord of lords? Unless he reigns in your heart by his love, and grace, and Spirit, you cannot sincerely adopt the triumph of our text; nor can you say on solid grounds, that the God of providence is your shield; that all the events which befall you will in their final issue work for your good; that the afflictions of the present life will lead to an eternal weight of glory; and that present joys are pledges of far nobler blessings in a future state of being.

O my beloved hearers! was I assured from heaven that this would be the last time these lips would address you from this place; did I know with certainty that, ere another hour,
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my powers of speech would for ever cease, and that I am now uttering my last words to men ; this would be the solemn parting, dying exhortation which I would leave upon your conscience :—Make sure of the divine favour ; give all diligence to be found of God in peace ; and rest not satisfied until you can say with heavenly triumph, Alleluja ! Jehovah reigns supreme in my affection, and I shall reign with him for ever and ever. Amen and amen.

SERMON

experienced was sufficient to overwhelm human fortitude. How agonizing, then, must have been the pressure of so numerous calamities, coming so unexpectedly, so suddenly, and in such rapid succession !

But that faithful and compassionate God, in whom this patriarch placed all his confidence, sustained his fainting mind, strengthened his heart in his agonizing struggles, and brought him, in due time, with safety and triumph to the harbour of rest.

That the book of Job is no allegory, but the real history of an eminent saint ; that the important facts here recorded actually took place in an early period of time ; and that there was such a man as Job in the land of Uz ; appears abundantly evident from the testimony of several passages of sacred scripture. Moses is generally understood to have written this interesting history, while he dwelt in the wilderness of Midian.

The prophet Ezekiel speaks of Noah, Daniel, and Job, as illustrious servants of God ; and plainly intimates, that the existence, fame, and history of all the three, were equally certain and authentic. The apostle James proposes Job as a pattern of
patience

patience to all believers ; and Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, quotes as a part of inspired scripture, the words of this book of Job, contained in chap. v. 13. Job's being more than one hundred and sixty years old ; his making no mention of the Mosaic economy ; the sacrifices he offered up being different in nature and number from any of the Jewish rites ; and many other circumstances mentioned in his history, strongly confirm the general opinion, that he lived in the days of the patriarchs ; that he might be descended from Nahor, Abraham's brother ; that though to him was made known the promise of a Saviour, and the true religion, yet he dwelt in a land of idolatry, and amongst the worshippers of the sun, moon, and stars.

Questions upon these subjects have given rise to many unedifying dissertations amongst the learned ; but let us, instead of attempting to gratify a vain curiosity, or of entering into critical inquiries about what cannot profit, and what was never intended to be known ; let us endeavour to understand the important instructions here revealed ; profit by the example here set before us ; and live

under the influence of those divine truths, which were Job's consolation in all his afflictions.

The subjects to which we propose, through divine assistance, to direct your attention, are, **I.** The nature, variety, and severity of Job's calamities. **II.** The purposes of Providence in visiting a righteous man with such complicated trials. **III.** The pious considerations which supported his mind under the pressure of such a load of woes.

I. Direct your thoughts to the nature and severity of the tribulations of Job.

His trials began with the loss of all his wealth and property.

For a time, as appears from the first chapter, the Almighty had set a hedge around his person, his habitation, and all that he possessed; had blessed the labour of his hands, had increased his substance, and had made him greater than the men of the East.

But, after he had for years enjoyed the comforts of abundance, and the benevolent pleasure of relieving the needy, and all the
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rational joys of prosperity well improved, in one eventful day, and in the most terrifying manner, his flocks are destroyed, his treasures are spoiled, his servants are carried into captivity by the Sabeans, and his prosperous circumstances are suddenly changed into the cares, and wants, and woes of poverty.

His afflictions come with an accumulating force. Immediately after the loss of cattle, herds, and wealth, followed the bereavement of sons and daughters. They were ten in number; they were, as he himself styles them, his joy and crown; they grew up as olive plants around his table; they were settled in goodly habitations around him; and they lived together in prosperity and peace. They had, that very morning, presented themselves before the Lord, had offered sacrifices according to their number, and had received the pious blessing from Job, both as a father and a priest. Perhaps returning from the altar, at the close of these morning devotions, he was congratulating himself with the soothing thought, that the gracious God whom he worshipped would long spare to him these sweetest objects

jects of his love and care. Little prepared was his mind to receive mournful tidings concerning them ; still less prepared was he to part with any of his children. Often grieved at the violence of her who bare them, he seeks and finds relief under this sorrow, in the affection and the company of his sons and daughters ; daily he cherishes the fond wish, that all of them may live to close his eyes in peace, to attend his dying bed, and receive his parting blessing. Sometimes, indeed, his heart trembles with secret fear, lest even one of them should be taken away : O that it may not be this one, nor that one, nor any, for I know not which to resign ! But if any one of my darling children is demanded, O may the bereavement not be sudden ! let me at least have the satisfaction of attending, and soothing, and comforting my dying child.

Such, no doubt, were sometimes the suggestions of this good man's mind ; for his whole history represents him as possessing the tenderest feelings, and gentlest affections. What, then, must have been his amazement and anguish, when the hasty messenger, without any previous warning, informed this
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fond parent, that his oldest son's habitation had that day been destroyed, not by the rude attack of fierce Sabeans, but by the more immediate hand of Providence, by a mighty wind from the wilderness; that all his sons and daughters were buried in the ruins; and that not one of all their household had escaped, except himself alone, to carry the tidings of the direful calamity!

The severity of this trial needs no commentary. Ye who are sorrowing in bitterness of heart under some mournful bereavement, contemplate the total, sudden, and tremendous desolation of holy Job's once flourishing family; so shall your own hearts dictate the becoming reflection, What are our sorrows, when compared with the sorrows of that venerable and distinguished saint?

But a stranger to his history might here reply, Though Job is rendered childless by one direful stroke, and though he feels the trial in all its bitterness, still, perhaps, the valuable blessing of health is continued with him; still, though forlorn, his eyes may behold with admiration the glorious works of God, or his ears listen to the instructions
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of heavenly wisdom, or his feet carry him to the sacred altar; still, may he not retain his rank and respect in society? may he not take his seat amongst the rulers of the land, as in former years, and feel joy in searching out the cause of the oppressed, and in pleading for the fatherless and widow?

Had this been his situation, he might, by such means, have endeavoured to mitigate the dejection of depressing sorrow.

But from his honours and his usefulness he was driven, with as much rapidity as from his other sources of comfort. Satan was permitted to afflict his body with so painful and loathsome a distemper, as at once rendered him an abhorrence to all around him, and a burden to himself: Of the name and nature of this disease we are not informed, only we can learn, that it was attended with excruciating pain; that his flesh was broken with sore boils, and his skin burned with heat; that he was full of tossings to the dawning of the day; and that a long succession of wearisome nights was appointed him.

The mournful consequences of being visited with this singular distemper, and of his
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being stripped of his property, and bereaved of his children, was the desertion of those who had formerly professed to venerate his character, with the total loss of influence and reputation in the places of concourse, where he had sat as chief among the nobles of the land: “My kinsfolk have failed me,” says he, “and my familiar friends have forgotten me; they who are younger than I have me in derision, and they whom I loved are turned against me.”

Had Job, in the days of his prosperity, been lifted up with arrogance, or enticed by sensuality; had he shewn himself regardless of the distresses of others, or unwilling to distribute to their wants, then we would not be so surprised at his sitting solitary and alone in the season of his distress; but that the man who had clothed the naked, and fed the hungry, and visited the sick; that the man who had not eaten his morsel alone, who had warmed the poor with the fleece of his flock, and had wept for such as were in trouble; that this man should, in the day of his adversity, look for comforters and find none; should be denied the soothings of sympathy; should find himself the object of
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universal neglect and scorn, is indeed a very humbling view of the ingratitude of mankind: yet thus it was with Job, and at such a time too when he was least able to bear contempt, and least prepared to repel the envenomed arrows of galling reproach; at a time when, enfeebled by acute distress, and when, deprived of all domestic comforts, he needed more than ever the gentle soothing of the sympathy of friendship, and of kind attentions.

But these were denied him at every hand; neither kindred, nor companions, nor domestics, nor any amongst the hundreds whose wants he had relieved, and whose woes he had banished, did administer to him the smallest consolation of condolence and pity. The general opinion was, that God had forsaken him, and therefore men might despise and revile him. Alas! even the wife of his bosom added to his distress by joining in the general suspicion and reproach; she who ought to have been his comforter in every trouble, and his pious monitor to hope in God under his darkest dispensations, takes part with the tempter, and under his influence derides her husband's piety, and daringly

ingly urges him to renounce his religion, and end his wretched existence *. But with determined firmness, and all that noble heroism of mind which true religion alone can inspire, he resisted the dreadful proposal, and nobly replied, “Thou speakest as one of the foolish people; shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and not evil also?”

If the scorn of companions and the reproaches of kindred be so discouraging to a pious mind, how infinitely more distressing must be the terrors of a frowning God, and the fears of his displeasure! This also was another ingredient in the cup of Job's affliction; and hence you find him at times uttering the language of deepest depression, “The arrows of the Almighty are within me; the poison thereof drinketh up my spirit; the terrors of God set themselves in array against me: I am troubled at his presence; when I consider God, I am afraid.”

Thus low was even Job brought, notwithstanding the sincerity of his religion and the fervour of his piety; his soul was troubled within him, and his mind filled with alarm-
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* Job ii. 9.

ing suspicions. The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear? The neglect of friends, though mortifying and discouraging to a generous mind, may justly be considered as a light trial when compared with the hidings of God's countenance, and the frowns of his indignation; poor and needy, childless and sore pained, Job might still have greatly rejoiced, if the light of God's countenance had shone upon his soul, and if the peace of God had ruled in his heart. But of this consolation he was often deprived in his days of adversity, and when he looked for peace, behold trouble; and for light, behold darkness. "The arrows of the Lord," saith he, "are within me, and the poison thereof drinketh up my spirit; he hath kindled his wrath against me, he counteth me as an enemy, and setteth me up as a mark to shoot at." In uttering these unbecoming sentiments, Job evidently utters not his own deliberate sentiments, but the sudden dictates of violent temptation. Though therefore the agony of mind produced by these terrific thoughts of God may excite our compassion, yet it furnishes no apology for Job's unbelief;

lief; he is to be blamed for yielding to the harassing temptations of Satan, and for indulging so injurious suggestions of that faithful God who was watching over him with a father's care, and was conducting him through dark and dreary steps to light, and liberty, and joy.

Here you are naturally led to remark, that in the astonishing history of this illustrious patriarch, we often read of permission given to Satan from the Almighty, to increase Job's trials. Hence you are as naturally led to inquire, how God, who is infinitely holy, could permit a favourite of heaven to be thus tempted of the devil. The answer is plain: Our God permits the dearest of his children on earth to be thus tempted, for his own glory, and for their spiritual advantage; for the trial of their faith and stedfastness; for the increase of their humility and watchfulness; and for exalting them to higher triumphs in glory, when they have resisted and conquered this implacable foe.

Satan has ever been opposing the glorious methods of man's salvation, and is continually endeavouring to distress, if not to destroy, the righteous. But his efforts are

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restrained by the power of the Almighty ; his stratagems are over-ruled for good, and they will at last issue in the honour of God, in the triumphs of the faithful, and in the everlasting confusion of the tempter.

This naturally carries forward our meditations to the second thing proposed in the method ; namely, to enquire into the causes, consequences, and advantages of Job's singular trials and calamities, with respect to himself, to mankind in general, and especially to the believing children of God, through all succeeding ages ; or, in other words, it reminds us of that important question, which this man, who was sorely afflicted, addresses to the God of glory whom he worshipped : “ Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me ? ”

The illustration of this part of the subject will furnish matter for our meditation, in the following discourse from this text.

May the Lord of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, and of Job, bless what has been said ; and to his name be all the glory. Amen.

S E R M O N V.

THE TRIALS OF JOB, AND HIS CONSOLATIONS UNDER THEM.

JOB ii. 13.

They saw that his grief was very great.

WE now proceed to inquire, what are the causes assigned in the sacred volume, why an unerring and righteous God permitted so great and so good a man as Job to be so singularly afflicted.

That afflictions spring not from the dust, and that they cannot come upon us without the divine permission, is the uniform sentiment of all who believe in the providence of God, and is mentioned with peculiar emphasis by Eliphaz, in the fifth chapter of this book ; yet even Eliphaz himself, and his companions, perverted this sentiment,

so peculiarly adapted to give consolation to the mind of Job, and thereby greatly increased the griefs of his heart. They urged, with all the violence of argument, that a just and holy God never afflicted the truly righteous; that all calamities are the punishments of sin secretly allowed, or freely indulged in; and that therefore even Job himself, notwithstanding all his professions of piety, must have been living in the transgression of the divine commandments, else he would not have been so sorely afflicted.

To rectify this dangerous mistake; to shew that whom the Lord loves he chastens; and to remind us, that the best of men may expect tribulation in this world; seem evidently among the important purposes, for which Moses was directed and inspired to write this history of Job. Yet, alas! regardless of these truths, the enemies of revelation lay hold on this acknowledged fact as an argument against religion; that its highest attainments cannot exempt the godly from calamities; that while the wicked prosper, the righteous are poor and afflicted; that many are the sorrows of the just; and that

that they are often more tried than other men.

But, though all this be readily admitted, it furnishes no just cause of triumph to sinners. They also have their afflictions, while they are destitute of the consolations which true religion imparts. Besides this, God is glorified through the afflictions of his children, and their best interests are promoted. His power is glorified in supporting such feeble, tempted, helpless creatures, amidst so many snares and trials; his holiness is glorified in sanctifying their tribulations, and in rendering these trials productive of increasing patience, experience, and hope. Finally, his faithfulness is glorified, in being with them in passing through the floods of adversity.

As God is glorified by the afflictions of his people, so their own souls are thereby profited. Hence says the prophet, “In the day of adversity, consider* ;” and when they do so, their spiritual profiting appears to all. In those adverse seasons, they turn their attention inward upon themselves ;

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* Eccles. vii. 14.

they consider their real state and character ; they examine, without partiality, their personal interest in the privileges of the children of God ; and daily give themselves to supplication and prayer, that the power of sin may be diminished, the Saviour endeared, the world crucified, and their longing increased for that heavenly state, where the days of their mourning shall be for ever ended, their tears of sorrow turned into songs of praise, and their trials on earth exchanged for the joys of everlasting life.

These introductory remarks on this second head of discourse, may be sufficient to convince you, that the afflictions of saints can furnish no apology, either for irreligion, or for unbelief.

But it may be useful to remark more particularly, some of the reasons assigned in scripture, why a holy and gracious God visited his servant Job with trials so numerous and so severe.

The three following include what might have been branched out into many particulars.

1. Job's trials were designed and calculated

hath a full right to recall the comforts which he hath lent me for a season.

Elihu inculcates the same sentiments in his sublime address to Job, recorded in the 33d and three following chapters of this book ; reproves the arrogance of self-righteous mortals in justifying themselves, that they might charge God foolishly ; and condemns the unreasonableness of such, in expecting that the Most High will give to men an account of his procedure.

Of such vast importance to the happiness of saints is the habitual persuasion of this divine sovereignty, that the Almighty is represented, at the 38th chapter, as pleading his own cause in this respect, and claiming from his people, in their deepest afflictions, an unsuspecting confidence in his wisdom and care. For promoting this, he there describes his own glorious majesty, his infinite wisdom, his resistless power, his uncontrollable authority over all creatures, his acknowledged character as universal Lord, and his full right to act according to that character. There, also, he testifies that his ways are past finding out ; that his nature, and counsels, and doings, are above all finite conception ;

tion ; that the real character of mankind is ignorance, and weakness, and helplessness ; that therefore they act a most presumptuous part, when they quarrel with his dealings, or imagine that they could have ordered events with more propriety than he has done.

These remonstrances, expostulations, and appeals of God to men, produced their proper effect upon Job, namely, sincerest self-abasement under a conscious sense of his own insignificance, silent acquiescing under trying dispensations, and a comfortable persuasion that the Lord God omnipotent, who rules the nations, does all things well.

In like manner, we should learn to acknowledge his full right to order his people's lot according to his pleasure, by remembering that he is the great First Cause, of whom and for whom are all things ; that his dominion is over every creature in heaven and earth ; his government reaches to every event ; and his glory, or the manifestation thereof, is the ultimate end of all he does in creation, providence, and redemption. If, then, you keep full in view his glorious character as an independent Sovereign, this will
unveil

unveil and explain the meaning of the most mysterious events which befall his own people ; for though he regards them as his chosen generation, adopts them into his family, tenderly loves them as his children, and assures them, that in all his dealings concerning them, his thoughts are thoughts of love ; still he retains his full prerogative to exalt or depress, as seems good in his sight ; reminds them that he will govern them, not according to their wishes, but his own counsels ; requires their unlimited submission to his severest dispensations ; and refers the vindication of his procedure to that grand and solemn period, when assembled worlds, from full conviction, shall universally confess, “ Just and true are all thy ways, O thou King of saints ! ”

Until that period arrives, it well becomes his people to trust in God, though he hides his countenance ; to venerate their heavenly Father, though he corrects them ; and to walk by faith, and not by sight.

Men and brethren, much of religion lies in submitting to the sovereignty of God, especially when events of Providence appear
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to us peculiarly mysterious; this is honouring him in his true character, as the Most High over all the earth; this is conducting ourselves as becomes dependent creatures, and is giving unto him the glory due to his name; this represses the rising murmurs of rebellious thoughts, and enables us thus to reason with ourselves against depressing fears: These our tribulations are ordered by the Lord; he therefore must have designs in view worthy of himself; infinite wisdom cannot be mistaken either in the means or the end; infinite goodness cannot be cruel or unjust; infinite faithfulness cannot prove false to his promise: therefore we will no longer oppose our fretful murmuring against his righteous allotments, but will humble ourselves under his mighty hand, will seek to profit by the rod, and will bow before the footstool of his throne, saying, “Father which art in heaven, thy will be done on earth.”

2. Another reason why Job was so sorely tried was, to correct and remove his imperfections, and to promote in his soul that spiritual life which divine grace had already begun.

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To many of the chosen of the Lord, afflictions are made the means of awakening them from their unconcern about religion, and turning them from the fond pursuit of lying vanities, to seek their happiness in God and the Redeemer. Job was nearly a perfect character, even in his prosperous days; and hence, amidst the elevations of human greatness, and the dangerous influence of wealth and applause, he acknowledged his dependence upon God; he dreaded to offend the Giver of all good, and carefully guarded against the approaches and appearances of evil. The whole of his history represents him as devoted to God, eminent for holiness, and distinguished for the most active benevolence, and extensive usefulness.

But, intermingled with the splendour which shone around this illustrious character, you may observe obscure spots, and unexpected blemishes, which needed the powerful influence of the fiery furnace to purify and eradicate.

Although Job is repeatedly styled an upright man, and perfect in his generation; this only refers to his superior excellence
above

above others, and cannot imply that he was without imperfection or sin.

In reading with care this book of Job, you will discover a twofold imperfection, very opposite to the general character of that distinguished saint. The one is a spirit of dejection, fretfulness, and distrust, which at times prevailed over his heroic patience, and which, under the influence of temptation and of human weakness, led him to curse the day of his birth, to call God his enemy, and to say in the bitterness of his spirit, “Thou art become cruel unto me, and with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself unto me.”

The other and more prominent blemish in Job's character was, a self-righteous opinion of his own goodness, an over-valuing his religious attainments, and a tendency to overrate his benevolent actions. Hence you find him, in the earlier periods of his history, not only repelling, as he most justly might, the false accusations of his mistaken friends; not only vindicating himself with becoming manliness from their unfounded censures, and declaring that he would hold fast his integrity until he died; but you find him,
with

with too presumptuous a confidence, wishing to argue the matter even with a holy God ; maintaining his defence before the Almighty himself ; complaining of the divine conduct, as if he had not deserved such severe judgments ; and boastingly saying, “ I am clean, without transgression ; I am innocent, and free from iniquity.”

This arrogant language he penitently confesses and laments, in the concluding chapters of this book. The bringing him to this confession seems one important purpose of all the humiliating calamities he endured ; and the gradual progress of his self-abasement is evident from the 37th chapter, and well merits our attention.

To cure him of this self-righteous spirit ; to humble him under the discovery of his own insignificance as a creature ; to convince him of his unworthiness as a sinner ; and to excite his gratitude for the smallest bounties of Providence, Elihu sets before him the holiness, the justice, and the greatness of Jehovah, as the Almighty Preserver, the supreme Governor, and righteous Judge of all.

Nay, God himself descends with awful
solemnity,

solemnity, summons Job to contest the matter before the divine tribunal, and requires him to answer for his rash and presumptuous expressions.

Unable to resist these solemn expostulations of the high and holy One ; enlightened to discover far more than formerly the glory of God, the holiness of his nature, the purity of his laws, and the perfect rectitude of his dispensations ; Job's self-righteous boastings were at once exchanged for the language of the profoundest humility and self-abhorrence : " Behold," says he, " I have spoken once, but I will proceed no farther ; I am vile, what shall I answer ? I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee ; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. If I speak of strength, lo ! thou art strong ; and if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead ? If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me : if I say I am perfect, this also would prove me perverse."

Thus, his trials being sanctified, he was humbled under the mighty hand of God, was stripped of every self-righteous plea, and was convinced that a holy God might most
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justly inflict far severer calamities than those which he had experienced.

As tribulation wrought humility and self-abasement, so did it also work patience. For this grace Job has been most justly celebrated in all ages ; and no where do we learn its nature and operations more distinctly than in the language, temper, and conduct, of this illustrious sufferer. For though, in some moments of temptation, you hear him uttering the murmurs of despondency, yet, in the general tenor of his conduct, you behold a bright example of the meekest resignation.

It may farther be remarked, that the sufferings of Job increased his compassion for the afflicted. In this amiable virtue he had never been deficient, even in his prosperous days ; but it appears from his history, that his personal and family trials quickened his feelings of pity for others. His language on this subject has ever been justly celebrated, as exhibiting the noblest features of a benevolent mind : “ I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame ; a father to the fatherless, and a friend to the widow ; for I made not gold my hope, nor rejoiced because my
wealth

wealth was great." Thus spake the afflicted Job; and happy are all they, who, in the spirit of humility, and not of vain-glorious boasting, can adopt the same becoming language.

I only add farther on this head of discourse, that the severity of Job's trials taught him many important lessons, which he could not have learned in any other situation so well as in the school of adversity. There he was taught, that all worldly comforts are uncertain and unsatisfying; that human sympathy cannot heal the sorrows of the mind; that God alone is a present help in time of need; and that, though no affliction for the present be joyous, but grievous, yet it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness to all who are exercised thereby.

5. The sufferings of Job were intended to convince him, and to convince mankind, that though God afflicts the dearest of his children, yet he most seasonably and graciously imparts to them both support and deliverance.

Any one of Job's calamities was enough to overwhelm the most vigorous mind; yet under them all he was strengthened and upheld,

held, was enabled to bear his trials with filial submission, and was honoured to testify before a heathen world, the efficacy of his principles, the value of religion, and the triumphs of his faith.

But, besides these proofs of the power and presence of the God of all the earth, in upholding and comforting this suffering saint, the apostle James calls our attention to another proof of the mercy of the Lord in afflicting the heirs of glory, which both explains the mystery of Job's sufferings, and confirms the saying, that "though weeping may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning*."

Happy, then, are they who endure affliction; amidst multiplied sufferings and sorrows, their heavenly Father manifests his pity and grace; and after they have suffered a while, he delivers them from all their troubles.

Though Job's trials were severe, yet their issue was glorious; in due time, his bondage was recalled, his character restored, his family established in the earth, his sorrows turned

* James v. 7.—12.

turned into joy, and the spirit of heaviness exchanged for the garments of praise.

The gospel of peace gives us no reason to expect a temporal deliverance or exaltation like that of Job, but it reveals what is far more important and gracious; it clearly testifies, that if we are in friendship with that God who orders all events; if we belong to that Saviour who has the words of eternal life; if we are born again by the Spirit; we may rest assured, that ere long the days of our mourning will be ended; that we shall receive of the Lord's hand a double recompence of joy for all our sorrow; and that, whatever may be the afflictions of a present life, they will appear but light and momentary, when exchanged for that exceeding great and eternal weight of glory, which God, who cannot lie, has promised.

Then will be clearly manifested the wisdom, the faithfulness, and the love, of all his severest dealings with his people in the wilderness of this world. The whole plan of his dispensations shall then be unfolded in its importance, consistency, and beauty; and all the redeemed, with united hearts, will

will then joyfully proclaim, that he hath done all things well.

Be patient, therefore, brethren, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh ; hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ ; go on your way rejoicing, and animate your souls with the prospect of that bright and blessed period, when it shall be said of all the followers of the Lamb, “ These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb ; therefore are they before the throne ; and the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to fountains of living waters ; and God shall wipe away all tears for ever from their eyes.”

SERMON

SERMON VI.

*THE TRIALS OF JOB, AND HIS CONSOLATIONS
UNDER THEM.*

JOB ii. 13.

They saw that his grief was very great.

IN Job's history, a memorable example is transmitted to all ages, that, though the children of men may be visited with severe affliction, this does not always afford certain evidence of their lying under the indignation of the Almighty, or of their being deprived of his favour, and expelled from his family: even his own renewed and beloved children are at times visited with multiplied calamities, not as chastisements, but as trials; not to punish for transgressions, but to prove the reality and constancy of their graces, and to exhibit them as examples of the

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power of faith, and the value of patience, and the beauty of calm resignation.

When these important purposes are answered by their trials ; when they are enabled to meet their afflictions with fortitude, and bear them with patience ; when they resign themselves unreservedly to the divine disposal, and say with sincerity of heart, Not our will, O heavenly Father, but thine be done ; then God is glorified, religion honoured, the power of God exemplified, and the unspeakable importance of genuine religion evinced.

Thus Job was tried at the solicitation of Satan ; and, being tried, his character was vindicated, his enemies silenced, his righteousness brought forth as the light, Satan's suggestions found false, and the goodness of God manifested, in enabling a feeble, tempted, depressed mortal, to hold fast his integrity, to possess his soul in patience, and to rejoice in tribulation.

Having considered the nature and leading designs of Job's complicated griefs, we now proceed to the illustration of the third head of discourse proposed in the method,—the
considerations

considerations which supported and relieved the mind of Job in his days of adversity and tribulation:

These may be included under three particulars: 1. Seeing the hand of God in all his afflictions; 2. Knowing that his Redeemer liveth; 3. Looking forward to a future and everlasting state of rest and happiness. To each of these Job evidently refers in those divine principles which he boldly avowed before his three mistaken friends, and which may justly be styled the confession of his faith, and the memorial of his religious experience.

1. Job viewed the hand of God in his trials, and, like Moses, endured as seeing him who is invisible: "Pity me, O my friends, for the hand of God is upon me."

Those hasty and unfeeling messengers who ran to acquaint him of his losses, looked only at the immediate instruments of his dismal calamities, saying, "The Sabeans have taken thine oxen, and slain thy servants; the Chaldeans have carried away thy camels; the lightning has destroyed thy sheep, and the furious wind from the wilderness has demo-

lished thy son's habitation, and buried all thy children under its ruins."

But Job raised his pious contemplations above the cruelty of the Sabeans, or the fury of mighty winds, or the penetrating fire of devouring lightnings; he saw fire, hail, and stormy winds fulfilling the will of God, and he devoutly acknowledged that the Most High ruleth according to his sovereign pleasure; he beheld the Lord God omnipotent swaying his righteous sceptre, and hearkened to the voice of him who appointed the rod: Hence you find Job silencing every murmuring complaint, by calling to remembrance, that the Lord gave, and that the Lord had taken away; that none can stay his hand, or say, What dost thou? that man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward; that Jehovah's path is in the deep, and the ways of God are past finding out; that to contend with the divine procedure is making man more righteous than his Maker; and that since there is not a just man, who liveth and sinneth not, therefore all deserve condemnation, and it is of the Lord's mercies that all are not consumed.

Were such sentiments habitual to us, were they

they allowed their proper influence on our minds, they would enable us to justify the wisdom of God in all his dispensations, and would happily reconcile us to the bitterest ingredients in our lot.

2. Another important religious consideration which proved a noble source of support to Job, and which he particularly mentions in the 19th verse of the 25th chapter, was his full persuasion that his Redeemer would never abandon him: "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Through the secret teaching of the Spirit, even amidst the obscurity of patriarchal times, this illustrious sufferer was enabled to rejoice in the mediation of that ever-living Redeemer who was foretold to Adam, and typified in all the sacrifices from the foundation of the world.

Job had known through traditionary revelation, and had embraced through faith, the ancient promise concerning the Messiah, or Christ; that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent; that Shiloh, Prince of peace, should appear when the sceptre was departing from Judah, and that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed.

In

In these faithful promises the suffering patriarch found the soothing remedy for all his fears, and a firm foundation for his noblest hopes. Though the period of the Saviour's appearance in our world was very far off; yet, believing what God had spoken, and relying on divine faithfulness, Job could rejoice in this promised Redeemer, and with adoring triumph could say, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour."

How wonderful is the power of faith! It is the evidence of things not seen; it is the substance of things hoped for; it realizes former and future objects as if visible and present, and yields not an hesitating assent, but an abiding persuasion. I know, says Job, that a Redeemer is provided, who shall save me from guilt and wrath, from sin and Satan: I know that, in consequence of the everlasting purpose of God, the merits of this Saviour are of perpetual efficacy; and therefore he lives, and acts, and saves already, in his glorious character of the one Mediator between God and man: I know that, according to the purpose and promise of his coming, he is mine in offer; and that, through
faith,

faith, he is mine in enjoyment : I know that he will suffer and die on earth as my surety and atoning sacrifice, and now lives in glory as all my salvation, and all my desire. The knowledge and faith of these things now yield me strong consolation, when I am tossed by the billows of adversity, and when I find no comfort in the world. My Redeemer lives, what fears then should overwhelm my soul ? True indeed, I am vile, and I abhor myself ; but what guilt cannot he pardon, and what corruption cannot he subdue ? Satan does indeed harass me with the whole force of his deceitful insinuations ; but what temptations cannot this everlasting Saviour remove ? what dangers cannot he prevent ? what deliverances cannot he accomplish ? and what joys cannot he impart ?

If such were Job's triumphs under all the uncertainties and darkness of the patriarchal dispensation, how strong and unshaken should be our faith, who enjoy such superior spiritual privileges ! As it was with Job, so will it be with us ; according to the degree of our faith in the merits and mediation of the mighty Redeemer, his suitableness and all-sufficiency, his fulness and faithfulness, so will

will be the degree of our inward comfort in the day of adversity, and in the prospect of dissolution: For there is far more in the Lord Jesus Christ to give comfort, than there can be in all the tribulations to which we can be exposed to discourage or depress. Besides reconciling believers to an offended God, he blesses them with exceeding great and precious promises, fully sufficient to compose their mind under the pressure of their severest calamities, and to cause them rejoice even when brought low by trouble. This is his gracious declaration to his afflicted people,—I am with you always; I will never leave nor forsake you; all my ways shall be mercy and peace, and will work together for your good: when you pass through the waters, I will be with you, to strengthen and uphold; and when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, my faithfulness will be your shield, and neither death nor life shall separate from my love.

That these promises may receive their reasonable and full accomplishment, our Almighty Redeemer takes into his own hand the disposal of his people's lot; declaring
that

that no evil shall befall them without his permission, and that no trouble will come upon them, except what he sees to be necessary for quickening their progress to heaven, and for promoting the purposes of his glory. He is the Lord their Shepherd, therefore their table will be prepared in the wilderness, in the presence of their enemies; goodness and mercy will follow them all their days, and they shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

If, therefore, you are amongst the number who know the Saviour, who have fled to him for refuge, and who seek their highest happiness in his friendship, you may say in every dreary season, My Redeemer lives, and is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, without any variableness or shadow of turning: nay, though you may be unable to triumph in him as your own Redeemer, or to say in all the joyful confidence of personal appropriating faith, and with all the holy triumph of the apostle, "My Lord and my God;" yet, amidst your deepest depressions, you may know from this faithful volume, that he is willing to be your Saviour, that he saves to the uttermost, and that whosoever

ever

ever cometh to him, however weary and burdened, however poor and naked, however wretched and miserable, will in no wise be cast out; will be received graciously, and loved freely; will find rest and serenity, and will be filled with peace and joy in believing.

3. The other important principle which was to Job a source of strong consolation, was, the prospect of the resurrection of the dead, a believing persuasion, and a lively hope, of eternal happiness beyond the grave.

Although immortality was not then brought to light by any outward revelation, yet the Spirit of God wrought in this illustrious patriarch that genuine faith which is the evidence of things not seen, and which enabled him to connect humble faith in an ever-living Redeemer, with the lively hope of an inheritance eternal in the heavens. Animated with this hope, Job looks beyond the tormenting cares of life, to the immediate enjoyment of his God in glory; willing to depart, and longing to dwell with his adored Redeemer, Job rejoiced that he would not live always here, amidst cares and corruptions, snares and sorrows; he rejoiced that
that

that in a little time he would find shelter from every storm, in the peaceful mansions of the grave, and would there be free for ever from the strife of tongues. But he chiefly rejoiced, that though worms might destroy his flesh, yet his body would be raised spiritual and immortal; and that, in this glorified body, he would see God, and be blessed in his immediate presence through ages never to have an end.

It avails not to enter into critical inquiries as to the degree of information that Job, the patriarchs, the prophets, and the Old-Testament saints, obtained concerning those future events here foretold, the second coming of the Saviour, the resurrection of the dead, the general judgment, the end of time, and the future glory of the faithful; it is sufficient for us to know, that these grand approaching events were objects of firm persuasion to Job; and that, through the faith of them, he became a patient sufferer, and was enabled to look beyond the grave with courage and comfort.

The same glorious prospects are well calculated to produce the same happy effects upon our mind; and wherever the
faith

faith of these future realities is strong, it will promote resignation, serenity, and patience, under the various trials which believers experience.

Are they visited with long-continued pain, with bodily languor, or with growing weakness? These come from the Lord, who in mercy wounds, and in mercy heals; who thus prepares his children for future glory, by keeping them from those snares which the tempter had laid for their destruction; by increasing their admiration of that matchless Redeemer, who endured such agonizing sufferings for their salvation; and by increasing their longing for the heavenly Zion, where the inhabitants shall never say they are sick.

Is poverty, and the prospect of hardships, the peculiar trial of the righteous in Christ? This their indigence may perhaps lessen them in the opinion of the prosperous or arrogant, but not so in the estimation of that compassionate God who feeds the hungry with good things, who chooses for himself a poor and afflicted people, condescends to men of low estate, preaches glad tidings to the poor, and wonderfully enables his afflicted children
to

to rejoice in the God of their salvation, even when there is no flock in the fold, no herds in the stall, and no fruit in the field. Well may they be glad, even amidst such outward calamities; God himself is their all-sufficient portion; to them belong the unsearchable riches of Christ, and their dwelling shall be in their Father's house, where there is bread enough and to spare; where they shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more; for the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to fountains of living waters, and wipe all tears for ever from their eyes.

Are they tried, like Job, with the agonizing remembrance of a desolated family, and with the mournful bereavement of their dearest earthly comforts; while they bitterly lament the loss they have sustained, and recall to mind the happiness they formerly enjoyed, the pleasing hopes they had entertained, and the many embittering circumstances which accompany their trial? While these painful thoughts prey upon their mind, and evidently tend to depress their spirit, Jesus, the consolation of Israel, says to them in the language of authority and love,

Peace,

Peace, be still ; it is I. He reminds them that their Redeemer lives, and will be their portion for ever ; he opens to them delightful prospects of re-union with departed Christian friends, and soothes their sorrows with the lively hope of soon being brought to the land of their kindred, to their Father's house, and to the innumerable multitude who have come out of great tribulation, and are now before the throne.

Lastly, Do they suspect that their own dissolution fast approaches ? and does it appear to them a most solemn thing, to think of being separated from every friend on earth, from all the means of instruction and grace, and from every opportunity of usefulness ? The everlasting Saviour can calm these gloomy fears, by faithfully declaring that he will redeem them from death, and ransom them from the grave ; that corruption will put on incorruption, and this mortal be exchanged for immortality ; that not one of his countless followers will be left behind, for he will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back ; and that, at his sovereign command, they shall come from north, south, east, and west,
and

and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of his heavenly Father.

Wherefore, beloved, comfort one another with these hopes, and comfort your own souls with these certain and joyful prospects. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

ON RESIGNATION.

2 SAM. XV. 25. 26.

And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city : If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee : behold, here am I ; let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.

SUBMISSION to the divine will implies, not only bearing the trials of life without murmuring or despondency, but the habitual exercise of those graces which are suited to a suffering state ; namely, our justifying God in his most trying dispensations ; our cleaving to him even when he smites us ; our loving him supremely as an all-sufficient portion ;

OUR

our deriving inward consolation from his promises, his faithfulness, and his well-ordered covenant, amidst external calamities; our putting iniquity far from us; and our pleading with that God who answers our prayers, that our tribulations may produce patience, experience, humility, hatred of sin, devotedness to the Saviour, hope of heaven, and growing preparation for that future glory.

This becoming submission of soul flows from a firm faith in the wisdom, and justice, and goodness of God; in the extent, rectitude, and sovereignty of his providence; and in his mercy and grace through the Redeemer.

When such proper views of the Almighty are wanting; when there is no abiding persuasion that our lot and our times are wholly at his disposal; and when we are not holding fellowship with him as a gracious Father, and as a God faithful to his promises; when these things are wanting, we will, in seasons of adversity, either sink into immoderate sorrow; seek relief by unlawful expedients; or waste away our days in fruitless repining against the God who afflicts us, and the instruments which he employs.

But when we remember, that the Lord reigneth ; that his providence is sovereign, as well as unerring ; that he is just and holy in all his ways ; that even when punishing the transgressions of his people, he is a Father who loves them with parental fondness, and is ever mindful of his covenant ;—this reconciles the mind to dark dispensations, and wonderfully calms it under the bitterest trials.

On these principles, holy men of old have endured manifold tribulations, by living as seeing God : So that, when he sent upon them either calamities which they had foreseen, or which they had not expected, or which came accompanied with many humiliating and aggravating circumstances of severity ; still they had recourse to God, even when afflicting them ; they owned his justice, they trusted in his mercy, and they bowed in humble submission to his will.

Thus it was with David, at the memorable period of his history to which our text refers.

The trial which he experienced was of the severest kind. Absalom was David's favourite son ; of most beautiful countenance,
and

and grown up to the age of manhood: this beloved and much admired son conspired against his aged, venerable, and affectionate father; formed a strong party in Israel against the king; usurped his throne; and drove into the wilderness his pious parent, and with him the wisest and worthiest men in Jerusalem.

It was on this afflicting occasion that David desired Zadoc the priest to carry back the ark to its place, and in the sublime language of firm faith, of unfeigned grief, and holy resignation, said in the hearing of his faithful followers, “If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation: But if he thus say, I have no pleasure in thee; behold, here am I; let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.”

This noble pattern of submission I would now illustrate, and recommend to your imitation: And happy will it be for us, if, through the divine blessing on what may be suggested, we shall be brought to say with sincerity of heart, Father in heaven, not our will, but thine be done! Good is the will of

the Lord ; let him do what seemeth good in his sight.

For comprising within narrow bounds this extensive subject, and for explaining it so as to be understood by all within these walls, it is proposed, through divine aid, **I.** To speak of resignation as a difficult, practicable, and valuable attainment : **II.** To suggest some directions for its attainment : and, **III.** To conclude with some practical observations.

1. Our first remark is, That though submission to the divine will is our most reasonable service, yet it is a difficult attainment, and requires the powerful aids of grace, for producing, maintaining, and confirming in the soul, this happy disposition, and this important Christian virtue.

It is, we have said, a difficult attainment. To be satisfied with the dispensations of providence, is indeed an easy matter when all things go according to our wishes ; when we are favoured with wealth, with health, with friends, with success in business, with rank in society, and with domestic comfort ; then
we

we find no great difficulty in being reconciled to our lot, and no desire that these mercies may be withdrawn.

But when tribulation abounds, and swelling waters are ready to overwhelm; when the Lord permits a Shimei to curse us, an Absalom to conspire against our happiness, a Judas to betray, or a Joab to load us with reproaches; when poverty as an armed man enters our dwelling, and seizes our substance; when sickness and death look in at our window, and mark for their prey the desire of our heart, and delight of our eyes; when friends prove perfidious, and they whom love and duty should have bound to us, are turned against us; when we look for peace, and behold darkness; when we cry for deliverance, and the storm increases, and all refuge seems to fail; then to look up, in silent submission and humble supplication, and to say without murmuring, "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and not receive evil also? The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord:" This is an elevation of soul worthy to be sought after; and, though difficult, is attained only by those who have turned from
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lying vanities to serve the living God, who rely on Jesus as their Saviour, and who prepare for heaven as their home.

If you could set aside experience on this subject, and what the best of Christians often feel; if you were to go entirely on theory and speculation, you might imagine it an easy matter, to place an unlimited, unsuspecting confidence in your heavenly Father's care, even when all around is dark, and threatening, and tempestuous: But make the trial, and then see who is sufficient for these things.

Let me ask even those who have known for years the influence of religious principles upon their heart and conversation: How is it with you, when your flocks are cut off from the fold, and your temporal prosperity blasted? Do ye then find it an easy matter to rejoice in the Lord, or to be joyful in the God of your salvation? Far, far otherwise; at such seasons you lose sight of God, by looking too much to second causes; you forget his right over you and your's; you call in question his wisdom, because you see not how these things are working for good; or you doubt his power, because he hath not,
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in your time and way, relieved you from trouble in answer to your prayers ; or you murmur at his government, because he disappoints your worldly schemes ; or with all the ingratitude of impatience, you overlook his manifold mercies, and the precious means of grace ; namely, the light of the gospel, liberty of access to the throne of grace, the ordinances of the sanctuary, and the prospects of eternal life through our blessed Redeemer, which you enjoy.

By losing sight of these things ; by looking chiefly at what is seen and temporal ; by feeling too ardently an attachment to those present enjoyments of which God in his wisdom has seen it necessary to deprive you ; and by not living on his all-sufficiency as your portion, independently of worldly comforts ; on these accounts, in the day of adversity your heart is overwhelmed ; your strength is small ; your fears abound ; and you are almost tempted to dishonour God, by saying, like Jacob in his fretful moments, “ All these things are against me.”

Yet despond not, ye humble and contrite, who are trembling at God’s word. Look beyond yourselves to the throne of God ; to
God,

God, as a Father merciful and gracious, receiving the petitions of the needy, regarding the supplications of the destitute, and saying for their comfort, Call upon me in the day of trouble, and ye shall glorify my name; cast your burdens on the Lord, and he will sustain you; acknowledge the Lord in all your ways, and he will direct your steps; wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he will strengthen your heart.

2. Unfeigned resignation of our lot to the will of God, though difficult, is practicable, has been attained by many, and may be attained by us.

Our heavenly Father has given us examples, from age to age, of the power of his grace, enabling feeble, timid creatures, to meet with fortitude, and to sustain with meekness, numerous and long-continued trials.

A few examples may convince you what he has done for his afflicted people in times past, and with what fortitude of soul he can enable them, in trying seasons, to adopt the magnanimous language of David in the text; and while we give them, keep this in your view,

view, that the Lord our God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and that what he has done for his praying people in former times, he can still with equal ease accomplish, if you give yourselves to him, and take shelter under the shadow of his wings.

He enabled Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, the three heroic worthies mentioned in the book of Daniel, to tell the proud king Nebuchadnezzar, “The God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and will deliver us out of thy hand: but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods.”

He rescued his ancient Israel from surrounding dangers, and enabled them to triumph in the sublime language of scripture: “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: Blessed be the Lord, who gave us not as a prey to their teeth; the snare is broken up, and we are escaped; our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”

“I heard,” said David, “the slander of many;

many ; fear was on every side, while they devised to take away my life : but I trusted in the Lord ; I said, Thou art my God ; my times are wholly in thy hands.”

Hannah was a woman of a sorrowful spirit, and she poured out her supplications in the temple, and the God of Israel granted her the petition which she had asked of him ; so that her countenance was no more sad.

Good old Eli was bereaved of his sons in a manner which marked the divine displeasure ; yet he was enabled to say, “ It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.”

Job was stripped of his health, and substance, and every earthly comfort ; but he sustained his accumulated sufferings and reproaches, by the lively remembrance that his Redeemer lived, and that his God would perfect what concerned him.

When the widow of Nain was bitterly lamenting the loss of her only son, and only earthly comfort ; when the sisters of Lazarus wept at the grave of their affectionate and pious brother ; that widow, and these sisters, experienced the difficulty of bringing
their

their mind to humble submission under such unexpected and overwhelming adversities ; but the compassionate Jesus knew what was in their heart, was touched with the feeling of their afflictions, drew near to them in their deepest sorrow, and, by the blessed influence of his grace and Spirit, his presence and his promises, soothed and comforted their agonized hearts.

Paul could triumph amidst the severity of his peculiar trials : “ Who shall separate me from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or height, or depth ? Nay, in all these things I am more than conqueror, through him that loved me.”

Abraham, strong in the faith, is made willing to offer up his son, his only son, Isaac.

Jacob, when dreading that he would never again behold Simeon, or Joseph, or Benjamin, throws himself into the arms of his God, saying, with meek submission, “ If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.” And Joseph, in his departing hours, thus calmly addressed his family and
brethren,

brethren, “ I die, and go to my fathers ; but God shall be with you *.”

In all ages of the gospel-dispensation, many believers in Jesus have passed through fiery trials, with all the serenity and fortitude of Christian heroes, undaunted at dangers, and saying with David, “ We dwell under the shadow of the Almighty, and therefore we will not be afraid ; we will say of the Lord, He is our refuge, and in him we will trust.”

These, my friends, are evidences, that under the severest trials, the children of God have been enabled to acquiesce in the divine will ; to encourage themselves in their God when brought low by affliction, or when surrounded with danger ; nay, to derive important benefits from their distresses. What benefits ? the men of the world would say. Their corruptions mortified, their graces improved, their souls brought nearer to God as their exceeding joy, and rendered more spiritually-minded, more dead to the world, more willing to depart, and more eager to be with Christ, which is far better.

For

* Gen. xlviii. 21.

For those calm tranquillities of soul, when tribulation abound; for those patient acquiescings in the divine disposals; for those triumphs over murmuring, unbelief, and distrust; for those dedications of their souls to God; and for those songs in the night of adversity; his people are debtors to that rich and powerful grace, which brings down their high imaginations, calms the tumult of passion, and fills with good hope, patient waiting, and strong consolation in Christ.

Let us therefore seek, that we may find; and ask, that we may receive. Let us delight ourselves in the Lord, for he can make light to break forth suddenly, and can turn the shadow of the evening to a joyful morning.

3. It well becomes us diligently to labour for that heavenly resignation exemplified in the text; for, if attained, it will sweeten the bitterest cup, and render smooth the roughest steps of our pilgrimage.

This proposition needs no proof; it only requires to be more deeply imprinted on our mind.

Consider, then, what are the sentiments
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of those afflicted saints who draw near to God, through faith in Jesus Christ, and who, having intrusted their immortal souls with their faithful Redeemer, do also commit themselves and their lot to the divine disposal.

This, or such as this, will be the language of their submission : “ Thou, God, seest us, and knowest our frame, and rememberest that we are dust ; thine unerring wisdom can best discern what kind of dispensations are most beneficial for us ; what corruptions need to be expelled through the discipline of thy providence ; what graces need to be proved and tried, or improved and purified ; what measure of prosperity we can bear, without being too elated ; and what trials would so wholly overwhelm, as to unfit us for the duties of life and godliness. Thou, O Father, hast promised not to afflict above what we are able to bear ; and hast declared, that though our calamities should be for the punishment of iniquity, yet thou wilt not utterly take away thy loving-kindness, nor suffer the covenant of thy peace to be removed : Abba, Father, thou wilt not deny thyself. Convinced of
this,

this, we lie at thy feet, we receive thy corrections, we take up the cross, and will patiently follow wherever thou wilt point our way. Though our favourite gourd should be withered, we will not, like Jonah, be angry with God; though our earthly comforts be taken from us in thy holy sovereignty, we will not complain that an enemy hath done this; though our all should be demanded, we will not revoke the surrender we made, when, warmed with gratitude for thy redeeming love, we sincerely said, Lord, all we are and have is thine.

“ Being thine, O Almighty Jehovah! through the ever-living Redeemer, and taking thee for our God, we welcome the portion thou appointest us; thy wisdom cannot err; thy power can set bounds to the raging storm; thy faithfulness is unchangeable; thy loving-kindness is better than life; and thou hast promised, for our comfort, that all things shall work together for our good; therefore in patience we would possess our souls, and would both hope and quietly wait for thy salvation.”

We conclude, by intreating you to consider

sider the folly and misery of the careless and indifferent part of mankind, who see not, and who acknowledge not God in their lot, who live without God in the world, and mind only earthly things. In their prosperity, they forget the Lord; they give not to him the praise of their daily mercies, but consume his gifts without humble gratitude, and foolishly presume on the uninterrupted continuance of health and abundance. But, when adversity comes upon them, they murmur and fret at the dispensations of Providence; they seek not to profit by the rod, nor to glorify God, by bearing aright what he appoints, nor to honour religion, by diligently seeking its blessed supports under their sorrows.

O that such would be intreated, ere the days of darkness come upon them, to turn from lying vanities; to acquaint themselves with God, as he is revealed in the sacred volume; to be reconciled to him through the Son of his love; and to give their heart to him! O that they would be intreated to take refuge in the hope set before them; to look to Jesus as the way, and truth, and life; to receive him as their own and only Redeemer;

Redeemer ; and to obey him as their Lord : thus would they find that he is their refuge from every storm, and their covert from the tempest ; a friend who sticketh closer than any brother ; a brother born for adversity.

Christian brethren, old and young, you know not what storms, what tempests, what adversities, you may yet meet with in life ; you need such a refuge, such a friend, such a Saviour. He waits to be gracious ; he is offered to all, even to the most unworthy of Adam's apostate race ; he stands and cries, If any thirst, let them come unto me, and I will in no ways cast them out.

Men and brethren, hearken, I intreat you, to the heavenly melody of this compassionate Redeemer ; incline your ear, come unto him, and he will make with you an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things, and sure.

By all the agonies which he endured, when wounded for your transgressions ; by all the redemption and forgiveness which he purchased, when dying on Calvary ; by the glories of his person, and all the riches of his grace ; by his omnipotent power to deliver the feeblest of his followers, and his
ability

ability to destroy the most malignant of his enemies ; I this day most solemnly and earnestly exhort and beseech you to rely, by unfeigned faith, on the unchangeable God as your portion, on the Lord Jesus Christ as your Redeemer, on the Holy Ghost as your Sanctifier ; and so doing, take the inspired volume as your unerring guide, the faithful promises as your noblest support, the moral law for the rule of your life, and the everlasting covenant for your abiding consolation.

Amen, so let it be. Amen, so we trust it shall be.

SERMON

corners of the habitable earth, and oppressed by many cares, and fears, and toils.

On the other hand, you behold the glorious Governor of all worlds, looking down with tenderest compassion on these humble travellers to Zion, holding out, for their encouragement, every necessary support, and animating them to pursue their heavenly journey with persevering patience, and with increasing alacrity.

Between both stands the inspired apostle, as an ambassador of peace, beseeching these feeble followers of the Lamb to dismiss all their alarms, to approach the throne of grace, to wrestle, like Jacob, in prayer for every blessing, to cast all their cares on God, and to leave them there, that with minds unincumbered they may run their Christian race, and may go on their way rejoicing; for says our text, and let the saying be deeply engraved on the mind of every pious worshipper, "Cast all your cares on God, for he careth for you."

Mark the extent of the important duty here enjoined: Cast ALL your cares on God; that is, all those matters which you may lawfully be concerned about, which you
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may bring to your heavenly Father, and may spread before his throne in prayer ; all your lawful cares, whether for soul or body, for time or for eternity ; whether more extensive or more minute ; whether relating to yourselves, or your families, or your friends, or to the welfare of Zion, and the interests of religion : Remembering your own helplessness and insufficiency, cast all these cares on God.

Such seasonable counsels, and endearing invitations, represent our holy religion in a very amiable point of view ; recommend the gospel of Christ, as well adapted to the various situations known amongst mankind ; and shew how divinely fitted Christianity is for silencing the fears, for soothing the sorrows, and for strengthening the faith, of the righteous.

In discoursing on this interesting subject, it is proposed, through divine assistance, I. To illustrate the nature and extent of the duty here enjoined : And, II. To suggest some plain directions, for enabling the most anxious and the most timid Christian to cast
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cast all his cares on that gracious heavenly Father, who careth for him.

I. We are to attempt some plain illustration of the important duty here enjoined, casting all our cares on God. This implies,

1. A firm persuasion of his infinite perfections, of his all-governing providence, and of his watchful care; a firm persuasion that our glorious Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, is an omniscient God, before whom all things are open and manifest: an omnipotent God, holding in subjection all the power, and influence, and stratagems of mankind; all the malignity, artifice, or fury of the fiends in hell; and able to make all things work together for the good of his people: a merciful God, who afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of men without cause: an all-present God, who is nearest his people when human refuge fails, who sits upon the floods, who manages the storm, and who is ever ready to help when the waters roar, and are troubled.

Connected with the fortitude which we feel from those views of the divine perfections, is the consolation arising from the
heart-

heart-cheering doctrine of his all-governing providence ; that he whom we adore is God over all, by whom and for whom are all things ; that he chooses out the lot of our inheritance, fixes the bounds of our habitation, orders aright whatever concerns us, and, with infinite ease, can turn the darkest midnight into a joyful morning. How well does it become the righteous to say, with sacred joy, From the ends of the earth we will cry unto thee, O Lord ; when our heart is ready to be overwhelmed within us, we will look to the Rock that is higher than we ! What inexpressible consolation, O Christian ! arises from the persuasion that the Lord God omnipotent reigns ; that no power is too great for him to controul, no occurrence too insignificant for him to direct ; and that nothing is left to the government of fatal necessity, or of fickle chance ; that he exercises a constant agency over the operations of nature, and the counsels of men ; that unerring wisdom, joined with almighty power, presides over the whole, and actuates every part. Amidst all the evils of life, these truths should yield solid peace of mind to all humble believers, should relieve

relieve their heart from anxiety, should give rise to manly, elevated joy, and should encourage the serious to cast their burdens on the Lord, and to wait, with serene composure, the issue of all events in their lot.

2. Casting our cares on God implies, not only habitual impressions of his infinite perfections, and of his all-governing providence, but a calm and constant reliance on that God, through Jesus Christ, the only Mediator.

Never will your mind feel satisfied with the allotments of Providence, or reconciled to what a sovereign God appoints, until you can view him as taking you under his peculiar protection, and dealing with you, not in anger, but in mercy.

Yet how can this be, seeing you are by nature children of disobedience, heirs of wrath, and lying under the condemnation of a broken law? Such is the description given in scripture of the whole human race; and to conceal or disguise this description, would be cruelty to your immortal souls. All have come short of the glory of God; all are by nature guilty in his sight; and all guilty

guilty sinners are exposed to tribulation and anguish.

But our God has revealed, by his gospel, a way of salvation, has set forth Jesus as the great propitiation, and has declared, that as many as receive him, and give themselves to him, and lay hold on his covenant, are delivered from all condemnation, and may triumph in the Holy One of Israel as their pardoning, pitying, reconciled Father, and their all-sufficient portion. Here, then, is the just God and Saviour, willing to take you under his continual and immediate protection, to treat you as his children, to bear your burdens, and comfort your hearts in your deepest adversities.

If you have come to the Redeemer for righteousness, sanctification, and strength; if you have given yourself to the Lord, and are endeavouring to know his will, and to obey his word; you may dismiss your anxious, foreboding fears, and may say with the Psalmist, O Lord, my hope and expectation depend on thyself alone; and under the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge. You may humbly triumph, The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob
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is our refuge; neither tribulation, nor distress, nor peril, nor famine, nor any creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. He in whom we believe is Head over all things, for the benefit of his church; he hath all power in heaven and in earth; he will keep whatever is committed into his hands, and will perfect what concerns us; in him we have all and abound; and therefore we have learned, in whatever state we are placed, therewith to be contented.

3. The duty enjoined in our text implies an unreserved resignation of our lot to the disposal of that God and Saviour, on whom our hopes for eternity are placed.

The people of God confess themselves to be strangers on earth, sojourners through a wilderness, and travellers to the goodly land of promise.

Connected with this confession is the expectation of difficulties to be encountered, and tribulations to be endured; of having their schemes thwarted, and hopes blasted; and of meeting with many humbling mortifications from false friends, or unrelenting foes.

Amidst

Amidst these gloomy prospects, it is the privilege and employment of the faithful to commit their way, their work, their families, and themselves, to that Almighty Lord on whom they have believed ; not to an unknown, inaccessible being, but to a God who hears their prayers, who is faithful to his covenant, and whose promises cannot fail. They humbly acknowledge, that to him belongs the full right of ordering every circumstance in their lot, not according to their fallible wishes, but according to his own infinite wisdom ; not measured by their short-sighted views, but regulated by that grand harmonious plan, which he is carrying on through all the ages of time, and which will most surely issue in the full display of his unutterable glory, in the everlasting happiness of all his chosen, and in the final triumphs of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Convinced, therefore, of the sovereignty, righteousness, and dominion of God, they say, in the language of filial submission and unlimited dependence, Our Father which art in heaven, not our will, but thine be done. Thou, O Father, hast graciously
promised

promised not to afflict us above what we are enabled to bear. Convinced of thy faithfulness, we entrust with thee our persons, families, and friends, our lot, health, reason, and life, together with all our interests and concerns; and we lie at thy feet, to be dealt with as seemeth good in thy sight; only let thy presence be with us, let thy grace be sufficient for us, and thy strength made perfect in our weakness.

Finally, Casting our cares on God, not only implies referring our present and future lot to the unerring disposal of his wisdom, but holding delightful intercourse with him in the various occurrences of our daily pilgrimage through life.

“Acknowledge the Lord,” says Solomon, “in all thy ways, and the Lord will direct thy steps:” that is, set the Lord before you in the ordinary or unexpected events of each day: in your personal or relative concerns, in your prosperous or distressing circumstances of life, in forming or in prosecuting your plans, still set the Lord before you; still seek his direction, presence, and aid.

In journeying through life, your steps may be encompassed with darkness, or your path
hedged

hedged in, so that you know not which way to choose, or how to act. In such situations, the great enemy of your salvation will endeavour to draw you into some unwarrantable imprudence, or into some forbidden course: You will be apt to despond, through the difficulty of your situation; and to forget, that the God of Jacob is the hearer of prayer, the helper of the needy, and the consolation of the wretched.

You will be in danger of seeking relief from your anxiety by flying to intemperance, to vice, or to the follies of the age. To escape those fatal dangers, see that you ask counsel of God. When you are in darkness, having no light, wait on him even when he hides his face; spread your cause before him, and remind him of his own gracious promise: "Then shall you find me, when you seek me with all your heart; and ye shall hear a voice behind you," the voice of providence, and the voice of my word, "saying, This is the way, walk ye in it."

Thus cast your cares on that unchangeable God who giveth songs in the night, who commands deliverances for Jacob, and who can make all afflictions work together for
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your good, who can deprive death of his sting, and can make you long to depart from a world of toils and dangers ; who can sustain your mind, under all your domestic cares, in your journey through life, and under all the fears of dissolution ; and who can enable you, amidst the severest deprivations, to adopt the triumphant language of the prophet, “ Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

II. I am to suggest some plain directions, for enabling you rightly to cast your burdens on the Lord, even in the time of severest distress.

1. Be sure that you are interested in Christ, and that you rely on his merits and mediation. He is the way, the truth, and the life ; he is the one Mediator between God and man, through whom alone our feeble supplications can ascend with acceptance,

ance, and through whom alone all divine favours descend to us. In the face of his Anointed, we behold the glory of the Lord; and in him alone, the God of infinite holiness can look on us in mercy, and can shine on us with the reviving light of his reconciled countenance.

While you remain without an interest in Christ, and without the experience of his grace, you must remain strangers to God, and can enjoy no friendly intercourse with heaven. There is no salvation in any other; he alone has the words of eternal life, and to whom else can we go?

But if Jesus is precious to your soul, if you have come to him both for righteousness to justify, and for grace to sanctify you; then are you accepted in the beloved, adopted into the family of God, and permitted to say, Things present, and things to come, are mine; for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Here, indeed, are glad tidings of great joy: Though I was angry with you, says the Almighty, mine anger is turned away, and I am become your strength and your salvation.

Beloved

Beloved brethren, be intreated to reject no longer the counsel of God against yourselves; for now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation. Lay up, then, a good foundation; for the days of darkness may come upon you, and they may be many. Turn to the Holy One of Israel; choose the things which are well-pleasing in his sight; lay hold on his covenant, and be careful to acknowledge him in all your ways, and schemes, and pursuits, and to lay before the throne of his grace, all your desires and distresses, together with all your fears and griefs; plead his promises, and rely on his faithfulness; make it your chief concern to profit by all your trials, and to grow in preparation for those happier abodes, where the inhabitants shall no more say they are sick, and where the Lamb, in the midst of the throne, shall wipe all tears from their eyes, and shall lead them to fountains of living waters.

2. If you would maintain a calm and settled trust, even in distressful times, live daily by faith on God himself, as your all-sufficient portion through the Redeemer; and then you may cheerfully leave it with him,

him either to wound or to heal, to exalt or to lay low.

You know, that with infinite ease he can make a way for your escape from every evil ; that he stilleth the noise of the waves, and the tumults of the people ; that he fainteth not, neither is weary ; that his hand is never shortened, nor his ear ever heavy ; that he is strong to deliver, and wise to direct ; and able to do far above whatever you can ask or think.

Have you, then, taken this God for your God ? Have you committed your way to him, and put your trust under the shadow of his wings ? If so, you may silence all your unbelieving fears ; may look up to the omnipotent Lord of hosts as your Almighty Protector ; may, like Noah in the ark, sit serene amidst surrounding floods ; and may humbly triumph, though the mountains shake, and the earth be removed.

If, indeed, you believe in God, as revealed in the scriptures, and if you believe also in Christ Jesus, you have nothing to do with anxious care but to dismiss it, saying, “ Get behind me ; thou savourest not the things which be of God, but of man.” What

though you are pressed down above measure with sorrow upon sorrow ; what though wave rise above wave, in rapid succession ; what though all these things seem against you ; still the Lord of hosts is on your side, and those continual sorrows, those dark events, and those unexpected trials, are all arranged in number, nature, measure, and duration, by infinite wisdom, and are all under the controul of infinite love. Knowing, then, the insufficiency of the help of men in the season of distress ; knowing the sufficiency of the immutable Jehovah, and the promise that his presence will be with you ; let not your hearts be troubled, neither be ye afraid ; refuse not to be comforted ; yield not to depression, but rest persuaded, that the God of all grace will strengthen and will stablish you, will do for you according to his promise, and will perfect what concerns you.

3. For enabling you to cast all your cares on the Lord, and, in all the trials of life, to maintain a stedfast trust in him who reigns omnipotent, live daily by faith on the great and precious promises of his word ; let these promises be your staff and support in
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the pilgrimage of life, your songs in the night of distress, your shelter under every storm, and the sanctuary of your souls in the time of trouble.

These promises are all amen in Christ; they all belong to you, if you belong to him. If you have relied on his merits, and unfeignedly devoted yourselves to him, then all the promises of his well-ordered covenant are made over to you as your sure inheritance, and will be fulfilled in their proper season, and to their full extent.

These precious promises relate to the life that now is, both temporal and spiritual, and to the life that is to come.

With respect to the present temporal life, God promises to his people, that he will care for their bodies; will feed them with food convenient for them; will clothe them with raiment; will fix the bounds of their habitation; will choose out their lot; will guide them by his counsel; will crown them with his tender mercies; will make their bed in their sickness; and will make all things to work together for their good.

With respect to spiritual mercies, he has promised that he will blot out their iniquities

as a thick cloud, will be a Father to them, and will treat them as his sons and daughters; will carry on the good work which he has begun; will restore their souls; will strengthen them with inward might; will keep them by his own power through faith unto eternal life; and will fill them with peace and joy in believing.

With regard to a future state, he has promised, that when his people are absent from the body, they shall be present with the Lord, shall dwell with himself in glory, and be for ever blessed in his immediate presence. At the day of final retribution, believers shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted; their revived, transformed, glorified body, shall be united to their immaculate spirit. Their powers of soul shall be inconceivably enlarged; shall be rendered capable of enjoying the full, uninterrupted, eternal presence of their adored Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; shall be enabled to hold continual, delightful fellowship with cherubim and seraphim; shall bear their part in the ravishing, everlasting song of glory in the highest, to him who sitteth
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on the throne, and to the Lamb who was slain.

Lovers of the Saviour! are you indeed called to those bright prospects? Have you those great and precious promises to plead, to triumph in, and to be the foundation of hope? Why, then, go mourning from day to day? why say that the Lord has forgotten to be gracious, that his mercy is clean gone, that his faithfulness fails for evermore? Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might: he is touched with a feeling of your infirmities; he will not leave you, until he has done all that he has spoken.

Live, then, daily on the promises of his word; they are both the warrant and the measure of our trust; they shew us what we may expect, and that our confidence is well grounded.

Be not then faithless, but believing; like Abraham, be strong in the faith, giving glory to God; and be fully persuaded, that what he has spoken, he also will perform.

4. If you would live without anxious care, and would maintain habitual trust in God amidst the dangers and trials of life, look
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on this life as your pilgrimage, and long for heaven as your home.

This will prevent your indulging in immoderate attachment to the things of time; will lead you to keep your present enjoyments in their proper place; and will preserve you from many mortifying disappointments, which produce fretfulness and depression.

Travellers to the heavenly Zion are not exempted from the strokes of adversity; and even although they feel them as acutely as others, yet they repress all rebellious murmuring, by saying, in the language of meek submission, Were those evils to befall us when we arrive at our Father's house, we might well be depressed; but when we are sojourning through a foreign land, an enemy's country, a wilderness of briers, a world of woe, what better could we expect? Yet let us be of good cheer; a few steps more, and the journey will be ended; a few combats more, and if we are indeed thine, O Lord, we will be made more than conquerors, through him who loved us.

Long, then, ye who have given yourselves to the Lord, long to depart, and to be with
Christ.

Christ. How plain, yet how sublime, are the descriptions of heaven which are given us in sacred scripture! "There remaineth a rest for the people of God. When the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, they have an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." "In the presence of God there is fulness of joy; and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore." Such bright prospects beyond the grave may well reconcile believers in Jesus to all the duties and trials of this present life, to all the allotments of Providence, and to all the prospects, the pains, and the approaches of dissolution.

Humble believers! why so dismayed at the thoughts of death? why stand hesitating and reluctant on the banks of this Jordan? Look beyond those separating waters; see the celestial country; see the city of habitation; see the palace of the great King; see the many mansions in your Father's house; rejoice in hope of the glory to be revealed; long to be for ever with the Lord; and say in faith, and in fervent desire, Come, Lord Jesus; yea, amen, come quickly.

Thus

Thus do all the afflictions of a present life appear light in their nature, and momentary in their duration, when compared to the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory, which God will give to those who wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus.

We now come to direct your attention to the proper improvement of this extensive and interesting subject.

First, Learn from what has been said, how foolish and arrogant those persons are, who trust for safety and success in themselves, independently of God; who rely on their own wisdom, talents, or exertions; and who, in their prosperous days, do proudly think, Mine own might hath gotten me all this: Hast thou forgotten, O man! that it is God alone who giveth thee life, and breath, and all things; that you have nothing but what you have received from him; that your mental powers, your vigorous constitution, your earthly possessions, and all your advantages of birth and education, all descend from the Father of mercies, and are all in his hands, to give or to withhold, to continue or to withdraw, to increase or to diminish,

diminish, as seemeth good in his sight. Trust not, then, in yourself; receive all your mercies with gratitude, use them with moderation, and improve them for the glory of God, and for the good of others.

Second, Learn that equally foolish and arrogant is confidence in the arm of flesh, or placing your trust in fellow-mortals. Their breath is in their nostrils, and whereof are they to be accounted? Every moment of their existence depends on the will of the Almighty; he is the sovereign Disposer of all mankind, and of all events; his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure amongst the children of men. They are the clay, and he is the potter; they are his instruments to fulfil whatever he appoints, and they can neither injure nor benefit you without his permission. Trust not, then, in princes, nor in the sons of men; their breath departs, their thoughts decay; in the morning they flourish, ere the evening they are cut down and withered.

Third, Learn how well it becomes us to unite in the devotional triumph of David, “Happy is he who hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.”

His

His hope is in the Lord, that Lord God omnipotent, whose kingdom ruleth over all, whose presence filleth both earth and heaven, and whose loving-kindness is better than life. His friendship extends beyond the grave, and never can be diminished ; his covenant of love is far more lasting than the perpetual hills ; and his power, superior to all disasters, remains the shield and safeguard of his people, amidst all the calamities of this frail and mortal life. This divine friendship, this covenant, and the power of God, may be your's ; this unchangeable Jehovah your portion, and your everlasting strength. He is revealed in his word ; he is accessible through his dear Son ; and his mercy and favour are freely offered in the gospel of peace : You have no need, therefore, to say, Who shall ascend to heaven to bring the Lord down from thence ? nor with another inspired writer, " O that I knew where I might find him ! " He is not a God far off, but near at hand : he is in Christ reconciling sinners to himself, and beseeching you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God : and can you be satisfied to live without God in the world, to live at a distance
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from him, and in a state of enmity and alienation, when through the blood of Jesus you may be brought nigh? Can you prefer what is temporal and transitory, uncertain and unsatisfying, to peace with God, to the honour which cometh from above; to the joy and rapture of saying, on good ground, The Lord of hosts, the mighty God of Jacob, the God of providence and of grace, the rock of salvation, and fountain of happiness, is my God for ever and ever; he will be my guide unto death, and my portion through eternity.

I entreat you, then, to seek the Lord while he may be found: Return unto him, that you may find mercy; trust in him at all times, and pour out your heart before him. Do not think it wonderful that we so often, so earnestly, and so solemnly, call your attention to these plain truths: we cannot too often remind you, that there is salvation in none but in Christ; that other foundation can no man lay; that if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; While, therefore, you remain without an interest in Christ, and without the experience of his grace, you
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are strangers to God, and can enjoy no friendly-intercourse with heaven.

Yet, alas ! how many are without Christ in the world, and how melancholy is the situation of such persons ! They come not to the Redeemer that they may have life ; they cannot sincerely say to the Almighty, Our hope and confidence are placed in thee alone. They cannot, on solid grounds, call the sovereign Jehovah their Father ; nor can they, with humble boldness, draw near to him as their everlasting portion.

O that such would consider their guilt and their danger, would lay up a good foundation for the time to come, and would give themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten !

Fourth, Let me now direct my exhortation to those who have taken the glorious Jehovah for their refuge and their trust.

1st, Mark with care the daily dealings of Providence towards you and yours ; treasure them up in your memory for a time of need, and diligently observe the frame of your own mind, both under mercies and trials. Thus will you often find, that seemingly accidental occurrences lead to most important

important events, and that what your enemies intended for evil, is productive of real and lasting benefit.

2dly, Remember that your trials are all necessary, and are sent in love, to purify you from sin, to wean you from the world, to bring you near to God, and to prepare you for heaven. Pray without ceasing, that all your trials may be thus sanctified, may promote in you a humble, submissive, watchful, circumspect frame of mind; may lead you to hate sin with perfect hatred, to delight in God with all the ardour of supreme affection, to endure as seeing him who is invisible, and to humble yourselves under his mighty hand, that he may exalt you in due season.

3dly, Cast all your burdens on the Lord, and both hope and quietly wait for his time and manner of deliverance. That glorious God in whom you are permitted to trust, is infinitely wise, and judges, with perfect wisdom, what kind of dispensations are best suited to dispel the distempers of our diseased, depraved natures; and as a wise physician, he adapts the medicine to the distemper, while at the same time, as a com-
passionate

passionate friend, he imparts strength to the weak, and power to the faint. Are any of his children high-minded and vain? He brings them down with poverty and distress, or he exposes them to reproach, and lashes them with the scourge of tongues. Do they seek their happiness in earthly enjoyments? He disconcerts their ambitious plans, their towering hopes, and their flattering prospects. Are they weary of commanded duty, or do they indulge in the fatal pleasures of forbidden folly? He hedges in their way with thorns, and blesses them with the kind corrections of a wise father. Still, however, he loves his people; and as his power is equal to his wisdom, he is fully able to perform whatever he has promised. Look, then, beyond the distresses of life, and say, All is well. Look not at swelling seas, or threatening storms, but look at Jehovah's never-failing power, and infinite love, and undeviating faithfulness; if he is your God reconciled in Christ, he will make all things to issue in your welfare and happiness; if you are his children, you may possess your soul in patience, even amidst threatening billows; and if you unfeignedly
resign

resign yourselves to his disposal, you may sit with serenity at the table which Providence has provided, and may say with triumph, Thou, Lord, wilt guide me by thy counsel, and then bring me to thy glory. Cast, then, your burden on this omnipotent and infinitely wise God, ye humble and contrite! He knows your frame, and remembers you are dust; he pities you as a father, and will not deceive those who rightly trust in him: he may correct you, but it is for your profit; he may withhold many things which your foolish heart would desire, but he will not withhold what is really for your good; he may sometimes lead you by a rough way, but it will at last be found the right way for the city of habitation. Be strong, then, in the Lord, and in the power of his might; though he seem to slay you, yet trust in him; believe to see his goodness in the land of the living; wait on him, and be of good courage, and he will strengthen your heart. Amen.

SERMON IX.

SELF-DEDICATION TO GOD.

2 COR. viii. 5.

And this they did, not as we hoped ; but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

SUCH is the instructive representation here set before us of the faithful servants of Jesus Christ in Macedonia. Although strangers to affluence, and involved in tribulation, yet their souls experienced peace in believing. They rejoiced in the God of their salvation ; they felt the ardours of warm attachment to the Redeemer's cause, and were filled with generous sentiments of brotherly kindness to
all

all the suffering members of the Christian church.

The contrast stated in the second verse of this chapter, between their inward feelings and their outward circumstances, is inimitably beautiful, and shews what mighty things the grace of God can accomplish; for the apostle there records their abundant joy in a great trial of affliction, and their rich liberality under their deep poverty.

Their liberality was even beyond the apostle's expectation: "This they did," says he, "not as we hoped;" not according to the extent we calculated upon, but far surpassing what could have been esteemed reasonable, from a people so poor and so afflicted.

Nor does his commendation of the Macedonian churches stop here; for in our text, the apostle also acquaints us with the source whence their bounty flowed; together with the unreserved surrender they had made of themselves to that great Lord in whom they believed, and their unfeigned subjection to the ministrations of his servants: "First they gave themselves to the Lord, then unto us by the will of God."

Here your contemplations are naturally directed to the powerful influence of the gospel at the promulgation of Christianity. Taking the subject in this light, a solemn, interesting scene opens to your view. You behold the heathen nations lying in darkness, and the shadow of death ; you see the Sun of righteousness rising, with healing in his wings, on the surrounding nations, and communicating light, and warmth, and joy, to these men of Macedonia. They awake to newness of life ; they rise to active exertions in the cause of God ; they are animated by the faith of Christ ; they feel their hearts knit to each other as his disciples ; they walk together in the fellowship of the gospel ; and, with gratitude and faith, they assemble in the sanctuary, to worship and enjoy their Saviour and God.

A similar scene shall, we trust, be witnessed on this occasion in our worshipping assembly. Some of all ranks and ages shall join themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant ; shall feel the full influence of good hope through grace, and of strong consolation in Christ ; shall glory in their subjection to Zion's Almighty Lord ; and, sitting

ting under his shadow with great delight, shall keep the feast with united hearts, and amidst their deep poverty or great trials, amidst their many cares, or fears, or wants, shall shew forth the Lord's death with the mingled emotions of sincere penitence and stedfast faith, of deep humility and lively gratitude, of enlarged hopes and warmest love.

To direct your meditations, and to aid your devotion, it is proposed, through divine assistance, in discoursing from this text, **I.** To set before you the example of these Macedonian churches; and, **II.** To recommend this example to your imitation.

I. On the first of these heads, **I** shall naturally be led to unfold those important sentiments, which are formed by the Spirit of God in the minds of true believers, when they are brought to happy union and fellowship with Christ; for our text evidently refers both to the object and to the operation of their faith. The object of their faith is the Lord, that Lord Jesus of whom mention is made in the 9th verse, who, though

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rich,

rich, yet for our sakes became poor ; and the operation of their faith is, giving themselves to him, under the conviction of his perfect suitableness to their present circumstances, and of his sufficiency for their everlasting salvation.

Both of these ideas are distinctly expressed by the Psalmist, when, under deep depression of mind, he devoutly exclaims, “ Into thy hands I commit my spirit, Lord God of hosts ; for thou hast redeemed me.” Thus believers in every age commit their immortal spirits into the hands of the Almighty Redeemer, because they know that he is the Lord God of truth ; that as God, he inherits, from everlasting to everlasting, all the glories of Deity ; that as Lord, he sways the sceptre of universal dominion, has all power in heaven and in earth, and can well secure against all opposition and danger, whatever is entrusted to his care ; that as God of truth, his faithfulness is a sure pledge of fulfilling whatever he has promised to his people ; and as Redeemer, his mediatory offices present to their view effectual remedies for their guilt, degeneracy, and wretchedness.

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But this leads me to what is chiefly intended on this first part of the discourse, To remind you of what is implied in the example of these Macedonian churches, when it is said of them, that they gave themselves unto the Lord. This implies reliance, dedication, and resignation ; they gave themselves, that is, their heart, and life, and lot, to the adorable Emanuel, as their Redeemer and their Lord.

I. This giving of themselves to him implies unfeigned reliance on his infinite merits, or the unreserved surrender of their heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, to be by him redeemed, renewed, and sanctified.

These men of Macedonia, before their conversion to Christ, were in a state of distance and estrangement from the divine favour ; were children of disobedience and of wrath, even as others ; alienated from God through the ignorance of their minds ; following after lying vanities, or working iniquity with greediness, or sporting themselves with their own deceivings. Such is the description given of the whole heathen world, nay, of all the unregenerated in the world, by the inspired apostle, when writing to the
Romans,

Romans *, and to the Ephesians †. Before such men could be brought to give themselves to the Lord, they must have experienced an astonishing change of views, principles, and affections. This change, as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles, was accomplished by the faithful preaching of the gospel; by the apostle Paul testifying to them, that God is in Christ reconciling sinners to himself; that Jesus has made peace by the blood of his cross, and is the way to the Father; bringing nigh those who were afar off, and saving to the uttermost all who come to God by him.

These truths, through the happy influence of the Holy Ghost, proved to the Macedonian converts the savour of life, and the power of God to their salvation; bringing down their high imaginations, and captivating their affections to the obedience of Christ.

Such is still the powerful effect of a preached gospel on those who receive it; translating them from darkness to marvellous light, by bringing them to the know-
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ledge of themselves, and of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Without this divine knowledge, men will never be disposed to give themselves unto the Lord ; so long as they remain ignorant of God's glorious holiness, or inattentive to their own depravity, they can see no comeliness in a crucified Saviour, why he should be desired ; but when they are made acquainted with their real character and condition, as guilty, perishing sinners ; when they are led to contemplate the immaculate and unchangeable purity of that God, who spared not angels when they sinned ; they are then brought with deep solicitude to ask, Wherewithal shall we come before this Holy One of Israel ? what shall we do to be saved ? Our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know them ? who can convert them ?

The remedy provided by infinite wisdom, and revealed in the gospel of peace, appears then far more precious to them than all the treasures of time ; Jesus, in their estimation, becomes the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely ; they adore the transcendent excellence of his nature ; they ad-

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mire the perfection of his mediatory character, and contemplate with humble transport the kindness of his love, in rescuing them from inevitable ruin, and raising their depressed spirits to the highest happiness and richest hopes.

These divine truths meet with their warmest acceptation as faithful sayings, they prove healing balm to their wounded minds, and lead them triumphantly to exclaim, Blessed is he who comes in the name of God to save us ! To whom can we go, O Lord, but unto thee ? thou hast the words of eternal life : Thy blood, O Lamb of God, was shed for sinners, and can cleanse from guilt of the deepest stain ; thy power can conquer the rebellious, and can change my depraved heart ; thy gracious offers of mercy are unlimited, and extend to me. Weak, therefore, and wavering as my faith is, I stretch forth the withered hand ; I know there is salvation in none else ; I hear thy words, If any thirst, let them come unto me ; I thirst for happiness and salvation, I come unto thee, encouraged by thy gracious invitations ; I come spiritually poor, blind, naked, and wretched, and I come for all I need, for
wisdom,

wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ; cast me not out of thy sight, deny me not thy love, take not away thy Holy Spirit ; save me by thy grace, and rule me by thy laws.

Let these be your sentiments, intending communicants ; let Jesus be your trust, your plea, and your joy ; he is willing, and he is able, to give you both repentance and remission of sin, every grace and every consolation. As your condescending Prophet, he can effectually enlighten your mind, and make you wise to salvation. As your compassionate High Priest, he can clothe you with the robe of his righteousness, he can succour you when tempted, and present your supplications with acceptance, and enrich you with all spiritual blessings from heavenly places. As your Almighty King, he can make you his willing people in the day of his power, can renew your nature, remove your spiritual deadness, subdue your corruption, and defend you from every danger.

Rise, then, superior to indolence and fear ; in the near prospect of sitting at the holy table, say, in the language of unfeigned surrender of soul, Behold we come unto thee,
for

for thou art the Lord our God! We rely on thyself alone, blessed, blessed Emanuel! we bring to thee our guilty souls, our unholy tempers, our perverse wills, and our perplexing fears; we plead thine atoning blood, thy renewing grace, thy resistless power, and thy consolatory promises; receive us graciously, love us freely, and clothe us with the garments of thy salvation, that thus, arrayed in the apparel of thy guests, we may sit at the table of our God with acceptance and comfort, may see thy countenance and hear thy voice, may partake of the refreshing communication of thy grace, and may keep the gospel-feast with holy joy.

2. Giving themselves to the Lord, implies sincere dedication of their time and talents to the honour and service of that blessed Redeemer in whom they have believed.

With sorrow and humiliation of soul they review their past ingratitude to this gracious Lord, and their past misimprovement of their time and talents; they bewail that they have lived so much to themselves, and according to the maxims of the world; that they have so much followed the dictates of depraved appetite; and that they have pur-
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sued with so much ardour the pleasures, wealth, and honours of this imperfect state.

But now, in giving themselves to the Saviour, they renounce those other lords who formerly reigned over them, and willingly take upon them the yoke of Christ, submit to his government, and say in sincerity of heart, What have we any more to do with idols? Lord, what wilt thou have us to do?

Remembering their obligations to him who loved them, and gave himself for them, they unfeignedly desire to be in every respect subservient to his glory, and they readily acknowledge his right to demand whatever evidences of attachment and service he may be pleased to require. Feeling the constraining influence of his redeeming love, they own themselves his purchase and property, and as such they consecrate their life to his service; they resolve through grace to submit with cheerfulness to the allotments of his providence; and they earnestly plead, that while they live, it may be to the Lord; that they may so follow the various duties of their station as to adorn the doctrine of their Redeemer in all things; that in all their ways they may set the Lord before them; that in
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all the transactions of life, they may exemplify an integrity of spirit and deportment becoming the disciples of Christ; and that, in their whole temper and conduct, they may maintain a conversation becoming the gospel.

As these are the prevailing sentiments of believers, when acting under the influence of divine grace, so, in the solemn seasons of self-dedication, this becomes the sincere language of their hearts:—Lord, what can we render unto thee for all thy love? With the costly price of thy precious blood thou hast purchased our eternal redemption; by the power of thy Spirit, thou hast made us partakers of thy great salvation; when slumbering secure, thou hast awakened us from our fatal insensibility, and taught us the things which belong to our peace; when trembling under the sense of deserved wrath, and the dread of divine indignation, thou didst calm the terror of our minds, and didst whisper to our souls, Be of good cheer, your sins are all forgiven; when conscious of being spiritually destitute and wretched, our Lord bestowed on us the white robe and tried gold, took us from the fearful pit and
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miry clay, set our feet on the rock, and put into our mouth the new song, Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, be blessing, and honour, and glory. Our Lord has an unquestionable claim to our supreme love, and homage, and obedience; he is worthy to be glorified by us in soul, body, and spirit; and shall not our hearts be filled with gratitude, and our lips with praise? Lord, we would be thine, henceforth, wholly, and for ever; O banish every rival, and bind us to thyself by the cords of love, that to know, and to adore, and to obey thee, may be our chief employment, and our highest delight, while we are in this world; that we may never dishonour thy name, nor desert thy service; may never be weary of any duty, nor harbour any temptation; may never forget the profession of our faith; and may never be conformed to the sinful maxims and manners of a world lying in wickedness.

For the attainment of this Christian character and conduct, we can have no confidence in ourselves; for, alas! our hearts are treacherous, our corruptions many, and our resolutions feeble; but upon thy grace, and
power,

power, and faithfulness, rest all our hopes of safety, stability, and comfort. Be thou surety to us for good ; be thou at our right hand, and we shall not be moved ; hold up our goings, that our footsteps may not slide ; strengthen, stablish, and confirm us to the end ; make thy grace sufficient for us, and thy strength perfect in our weakness.

5. Giving themselves to the Lord implies an unreserved surrender of their lot to his unerring disposal.

They know that he in whom they have believed is King of kings, and Lord of lords ; is Governor among the nations, and Head over all things for his church ; that though he gives not account of his matters, yet he does all things well ; that his providential care is peculiarly interested in behalf of his humble followers ; and that he claims it as his prerogative, to feed his flock as a shepherd, and to lead them by the right way to the city of habitation. They are fully persuaded of his ability and love to confer upon them every temporal supply, when he sees it for their good ; to deliver from every dreaded calamity ; to be their refuge in the time of trouble ; and to promote their happiness

piness by ways they have not known, and by dispensations which, when exposed to them, they may feel oppressive.

They rejoice in the declarations of scripture, that whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives; that in faithfulness he afflicts; and that, though weeping may endure for a night, and this night may seem long, or stormy, or dark, yet joy will arise in the morning; that though clouds and darkness are round about his throne, and though his way is in the sea, and his path in the deep waters, yet the Lord sits on the floods, and manages the storm.

They remember the goodness, rectitude, and sovereignty, of the great Lord of Zion, and feel their obligations to be as unreserved in their submission to his will, as in their obedience to his commands.

Under these impressions, they humbly resign themselves, and all they possess, to be disposed of as his infinite wisdom sees most subservient to their everlasting welfare. Their desire and endeavour is, that they may neither shrink from any difficulty he appoints, nor faint when he rebukes; that
they

they may not murmur when he withholds, nor repine when he removes what he has bestowed ; that, with meek acquiescence of soul, they may sustain the most afflicting dispensations, and, with full reliance on his faithfulness, may rest assured, that what they know not now, they shall know hereafter.

This, therefore, becomes their unfeigned language in the solemn seasons of self-dedication : Lord, into thy hands we commit all our temporal interests, and freely own that all we are, and all we have, is thine ; our health, our substance, our prospects and pursuits, and all our enjoyments, we leave to thy disposal ; we desire no higher happiness than thy friendship and presence ; give wealth, influence, or applause, to others, only lift on our souls the light of thy countenance, and we will be satisfied ; say that thou art our refuge, our shield, and our everlasting portion, and we will welcome suffering, scorn, persecution, or death ; testify to our souls that thou wilt never leave nor forsake us, and though the fig-tree should not blossom, and the fields should yield no meat ; though the flocks should be
cut

cut off from the fold, yet we will rejoice in the Lord, and be joyful in the God of our salvation.

We glorify God in the furnace, when we say, Father, not our will, as to the nature, number, season, duration, and all the embittering circumstances of our trials, but thy will be done; for thou art just in all thy ways, and holy in all thy works.

This brings unspeakable serenity to the mind, when we acknowledge the independent, immutable sovereignty of our unerring heavenly Father; when we yield willing subjection to him, as his obedient children; when we hear with reverence the voice of his correcting rod; when we entertain the firm persuasion that he is love; and when we say, in the patience of hope, Though he slay us, yet will we trust in him.

We give ourselves to him in the manner of his people, when we hold fellowship with him in the dispensations of his providence; when we acknowledge him in all our ways, and amidst the cares or comforts of life, walk humbly with our God; when we receive his temporal mercies with gratitude, and improve them to his glory; when, under
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trials, we search out the cause, and bring our proud, resisting spirits to unreserved submission ; when, not discouraged by the hardships of the way, nor entangled by the solicitations of the world, we press forward for the prize of our high calling ; and go from strength to strength, until we appear before our **God in Zion.**

Be it, then, your daily prayer and mine, that in our temper, attainments, and conduct, we may follow the example of the Christian churches in Macedonia ; by sincere reliance on the unchangeable Redeemer for our complete salvation ; by unreserved dedication of our powers to his service ; and by humble resignation of our lot to his disposal.

May the **Lord** bless what has been said ; and to his name be all the glory. **Amen.**

SERMON X.

SELF-DEDICATION TO GOD.

2 COR. viii. 5.

And this they did, not as we hoped ; but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

THE *Second* thing proposed in the illustration of this subject, was to recommend to your imitation the example of the Macedonian churches ; and to beseech you, in this the day of your merciful visitation, to give yourselves to the Lord in a covenant never to be forgotten.

In entering on this part of the subject, I wish to have my mind deeply impressed with

the persuasion, that I am now endeavouring to fulfil one of the most important designs of the ministerial office, by doing what in me lies to gain your hearts, my beloved brethren, to the admiration and acceptance of the matchless Saviour. Until this is accomplished, our preaching is vain, and your souls remain strangers to salvation and happiness.

O that my feeble endeavours were made the means, through the Holy Spirit, of captivating your supreme affection and desires to that Saviour who is the chief among ten thousand !

Give yourselves, therefore, to the Lord ; for, 1. This is a duty, and your most reasonable service : 2. Your doing so is a privilege, and essentially connected with your best interests here and hereafter : 3. Your doing so will open for you sources of consolation through life, and through eternity.

1. Your giving yourselves to the Lord in all the extent already illustrated, is your duty.

Jesus is worthy to receive all blessing, dominion, and glory ; therefore it is acting a wise and rational part, to give yourselves to
him

him who waits to be gracious, and who most justly challenges your supreme veneration and homage.

In himself he possesses every excellence; for he is fairer than the sons of men, and without spot or blemish. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; full of grace and truth; without any variableness, or shadow of turning. Angels adore him: They celebrate his glories with unceasing ardour; the contemplation of his infinite excellence engages their whole powers; and the enjoyment of his presence constitutes their highest felicity. The many millions of ransomed saints before the throne lay their crowns at the Redeemer's feet, and, tuning their golden harps, they sing in joyful concert that new and noblest song of Zion, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of all kindreds, and languages, and nations."—Saints on earth extol him as the Wonderful Counsellor, the Sun of righteousness, the desire of nations, and the pearl of great price.

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But there is no name or character on earth to which we can compare the dignity and excellence of our blessed Redeemer. Do we speak of the understanding of the wise? In him dwelleth all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Do we applaud the mighty? His greatness is unsearchable. Do we admire the generous? He giveth liberally, and without upbraiding. Compared with his greatness, the glory of Solomon is as a feeble distant shadow; compared with his generosity, the virtues of Joseph are only scanty streams; compared with his condescension, the meekness of Moses was only the faint resemblance of that virtue, in him who is meek and lowly in heart.

O adorable Redeemer! art thou thus infinitely perfect, and thus completely amiable? and shall not my whole soul admire, and love, and worship thee?

United with his personal excellence, contemplate the wonders of his redeeming love.

It well becomes us to devote ourselves to him, for he first loved us; he died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God; he made his soul an offering for sin, and bare our iniquities in his own body on the tree. Herein
indeed

indeed is love,—generous, unmerited, and most disinterested love, which cannot be sufficiently extolled; love which, after all the researches of men and angels, surpasses their comprehension!

Trace this redeeming love to its source, and it leads back your thoughts to the councils of peace before the world began. Mark this love in its constancy and progress, and you behold the anointed Saviour sending his prophets to prepare the way of the Lord; and when the fulness of time arrived, you see Jesus, leaving the glory which he had with the Father, becoming a man of sorrows, and humbling himself to the death of the cross. Let Calvary declare the price he paid for your redemption; contemplate the heights of bliss from whence the Saviour descended, the depths of his humiliation, the bitterness of his sorrows, and the variety of his sufferings; hear him, in agony, exclaiming, “Now is my soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death!” see him wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and shedding his precious blood for the remission of our sins! Shall not the remembrance of his love constrain us to render

der to him all blessing, and honour, and glory? Can we hear of it as an uninteresting subject? Can we give it a cold or unthankful reception? Shall it leave only faint impressions on our mind, which earth or hell can soon efface? Nay, rather let it fill your mind with wonder, and your heart with gratitude, and determine every worshipper to engage with alacrity in the performance of his duty, and to give himself this day to the Lord, in an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten.

2. Your giving yourselves to the Lord is a privilege, and connected with your best interests here and hereafter.

He well knows all your circumstances, weaknesses, and wants, and is able to help you in every time of need.

Perhaps at this moment you are labouring and heavy-laden under the alarming sense of guilt and unworthiness. The sins of your unrenewed state, with their aggravating circumstances, rise to your view, and lie heavy on your mind; so that you are walking in darkness, are dreading the terrible effects of the divine indignation, and are writing bitter things against yourselves.

In these circumstances, to whom can you go but to him who hath the words of eternal life ; who purchased peace by the blood of his cross ; who made reconciliation for transgressors ; whose infinite merits can atone for your infinitely aggravated guilt ; and who is willing, as well as able, to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him.

Believest thou this ? Hast thou given thyself unto the Lord ?—Know then, for your comfort, that you shall not be cast off ; but that he will receive you graciously, will love you freely, will cover you with the robe of his righteousness, and array you in the garments of salvation.

Perhaps you are contending with some powerful corruption, which has often led you into captivity, and which still wars against your soul ; you long for liberty from its wretched bondage ; you have striven in vain for the mastery ; some new temptation, suited to this sin which besets you, prevails over your feeble resolutions, and involves you in new darkness, remorse, and terror.

If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed. Though, therefore, your temptations

tations be many and great ; and though the depravity of your nature be ready to prevail, yet your Redeemer is strong, and the Lord of hosts is his name ! He gave himself to redeem you from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. He invites you to come to him, that you may have life more abundantly ; and to such as give themselves to him, he will fulfil the promise, that where sin abounded, grace shall much more abound ; that the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus shall make his people free from the law of sin and death ; and that the very God of peace will sanctify them in soul, body, and spirit, and will preserve them unto the coming of the Lord.

Give yourselves, then, to the Lord, and he will strengthen your heart ; will make you more than conquerors through his grace ; will work in you to will and do of his good pleasure ; he, in his sovereign goodness, will fill your souls with the triumphs of faith, with the ardours of love, with the joy of salvation, and with deliverance from every idol : Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why disquieted within me ? Still hope in
God,

God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Perhaps you may, ere long, be called to difficult duties and arduous services; like righteous Noah, to stand up for the cause of God in opposition to the manners and sentiments of the world lying in wickedness; like Moses, to endure the trial of cruel mockings; or, like Joseph, to encounter the hatred of brethren, the temptations of the artful, and all the dangerous allurements of prosperity, power, and influence. In such situations you are conscious of your own weakness; your hearts are ready to be overwhelmed, and your hands grow feeble in the prospect of difficult duties and severe trials. If you have given yourself to the Lord, you are warranted to triumph, That he who is with you is mightier, by far, than all who can be against you; that, through Christ strengthening you, all things will be practicable; that he can make even worm Jacob to thresh the mountains, and can render the weakest of his followers fully sufficient for the noblest undertakings. As he was with Moses, making him the deliverer of Israel; or with David when a stripling, making him the

the conqueror of Goliah ; or with Joseph, in the house of Potiphar, and the court of Pharoah ; and with the despised woman of Samaria, making her the successful preacher of Christ to multitudes in the city : so he can teach your hands to war, and your fingers to fight, and can fully work in you to will and do of his good pleasure ; making you strong in the Lord, fruitful in every good work, and faithful to the death.

Perhaps trials may be waiting you, both numerous and severe, widely different from what you now forebode, and far more bitter than you have ever yet experienced ; like the trials of Abraham, they may come in your old age ; like those of Joseph, they may come at unexpected seasons, and in the midst of prosperous days ; or, like those of Job, they may assault you in rapid succession, and may strip you of health, property, friends, and fame, of sons and daughters, and every domestic comfort. Lo ! here is your refuge : “ The Lord is a sun and shield, and will give both grace and glory.”

You say, that you have given yourselves unto the Lord ; that you build your everlasting hope on the infinite merits of the Saviour ;

viour; that you have committed your temporal interests to his unerring management, and have consecrated all you possess to his disposal and glory. Fear not, then, though deep calleth unto deep, and though the waters roar and are troubled: Here is a covert from the storm, and a chamber of rest for the weary; here is a friend who sticketh closer than any brother, and styles himself a brother born to adversity. With infinite ease, and by wondrous dispensations, he can deliver both from deceit and violence; can heal your diseases, and supply your wants; can dry up your tears, and calm the tumults of your grief, and sustain your fainting minds in the day of sore adversity. If you have fled to him for refuge, you may well say with the Psalmist, "I had fainted had I not believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living: I looked on my right hand and on my left, but there was none to know me; all refuge failed me, no man cared for my soul; I cried to thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living." Jehovah my portion! how safe and dignified! a God of mercy unto me, who can lighten every burden,
soothe

soothe every sorrow, and confer every comfort; who hath in faithfulness said, My strength shall be perfected in your weakness; and who hath graciously promised, that he will never leave nor forsake me; but will be with me always, even unto the end.

Your end, beloved brethren, fast approaches; soon must you bid farewell to this world, to all its connections, and to all its comforts. You feel it a solemn matter to contemplate the issues of death; to enter into an unseen world; to appear before the impartial Judge; and to inherit an eternity of bliss or woe.

At such prospects the world recedes; its boasted pleasures appear insipid; its glories are unsatisfactory, and its follies bitter. When death approaches, the kind attentions of friends may alleviate your pain, but cannot calm the fears of your heart. Your deviations from the paths of duty rise to your view, and shake the tranquillity of your mind. Your former duties, services, and attainments in religion, appear exceedingly defective. You feel your need of pardon, and acknowledge that you are not entitled to reward.

But the glorious gospel of our salvation
informs

informs us of what can quiet the mind under all the fears of death, and can fill us with unshaken serenity in the full prospects of eternity. He who can adopt the language of our text, I have given myself to the Lord,—may nobly exult, with the apostle, “I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he will keep what I have committed unto him.” I rest on that sure foundation laid in Zion; and having received Christ Jesus the Lord, amidst the swellings of Jordan, I shall lift up my head with joy, and see my redemption drawing nigh. By dying, Jesus hath overcome death in my behalf; by lying in the grave, he has consecrated it, as a chamber of rest, where my sleeping dust shall remain safe under his care to the morning of the resurrection; and by his ascending up on high, leading captivity captive, he gives me the pledge, that mansions in my Father’s house are prepared for my reception; that he will receive me to himself; and that where he is, I will be also.

3. Having urged your imitation of the example mentioned in my text, from the motives of wisdom, and of safety; I have
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only to add, in the *last* place, That solid comfort, and exalted hopes, are the happy consequences of giving yourselves to the Lord.

You feel and own, that this world, with all it has promised, or can bestow, yields neither satisfaction nor happiness, in prosperity or adversity.

Hence, the sacred volume represents the children of men as spending their strength for vanity, when they seek rest or enjoyment in the things of this world. Compassionating their folly, the gracious Saviour tenderly invites them to himself, with affectionate assurances of finding in him what other comforts cannot impart: "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." "In the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." When any have come unto him, and have laid hold on his covenant, and given themselves to the Lord; the language of scripture to all such is, "Rejoice in the Lord always; be glad in him; rejoice in hope of the glory to be revealed."

Amidst all the changes of their outward circumstances, and all the variety of their
inward

inward fears, Jesus is the same, without any variableness or shadow of turning. Strong consolation, and good hope through grace, are provided for all who have fled to him for refuge.

The glories of his person ; the perpetual efficacy of his mediation ; the promises of his word ; the immutability of the love which he bears to his believing people ; and the great goodness he hath prepared for them who love him, are streams of spiritual consolation, which flow from the throne of God and the Lamb ; which follow the godly through all the vicissitudes of this mortal life ; which accompany the Christian when he walks through the valley of the shadow of death ; and which, rising as high as their source, conduct him by gentle progress to the rivers of pleasure, which are at God's right hand for evermore.

But, to make you fully acquainted with the solid joys which the gospel of peace imparts, it would be necessary to conduct you through all the steps of the Christian's pilgrimage ; through all his growing experience of fulfilled promises and enlarged hopes, of filial dependence on his heavenly Father's

care, and of spiritual intercourse with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; through all his enjoyment of love and faithfulness, both in the bounties and trials of life; and through all the exulting transports of his heaven-born spirit, when he feels his deliverance drawing nigh, and when he longs for immortality and for heaven.

On this extensive field I cannot at present enter; but shall conclude, by addressing myself, in the improvement of this discourse,

First, To the young, vigorous, and healthy. Give yourselves this day to the Lord Jesus Christ; receive him as your only Saviour; and submit to him as your Almighty Lord. Embrace, we beseech you, in the nervous language of our forefathers, embrace a full Christ, in all his characters and offices, as your Prophet, Priest, and King; your instructor, example, atonement, trust, and joy: receive him with your whole heart; bring your benighted understanding to be enlightened by his word and Spirit; your will to be renewed by his all-conquering grace; your affections to be captivated by his constraining love; your conscience to be sprinkled
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by his atoning blood ; and your powers of body to be sanctified as members of righteousness unto the Lord : Thus come to him for the whole of his salvation ; for complete deliverance from guilt, corruption, and unbelief ; from danger, alarm, and the dread of death.

My young friends, look forward to what may befall you in the world, and thence learn the unspeakable importance of receiving Christ Jesus, and of being interested in the friendship of that Almighty Lord, who is in himself an all-sufficient help. If you continue to live a few years in the world, you will meet with difficulties which your own fortitude cannot sustain : prepare, then, for these evil days, by taking refuge in him who is a hiding-place from the storm ; a friend always accessible, always near, and always able to help.

Second, To those who have received Christ Jesus the Lord. Renew, this day, your dedication of yourselves to him, and let this renewed dedication be unfeigned and unreserved ; give yourselves to be the Lord's, to please, and serve, and honour him ; plead

his promised grace, that you may live to his glory in the world ; may have respect to all his precepts ; may walk in his commandments and ordinances blameless ; and may make the light of an uniform, exemplary, watchful, circumspect conduct, so to shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may be led to glorify your heavenly Father, and to serve with fidelity that gracious Redeemer, to whom you are, and will be to eternity, under inexpressible obligations.

Third, To those who have devoted themselves to the God of their salvation. Resign all your interests to his unerring disposal : He hath not promised you exemption from trials ; and he is daily reminding you, by the varying events of his providence, that this is not your rest ; but in faithfulness he has said to you, that he will be your shield and support ; that no tribulation shall continue longer, or be more severe, than what your circumstances demand ; that all things shall work for your good ; and that, when you pass through the waters, he will be with you : Commit, then, your way unto the Lord,
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and trust also in him ; lie submissively at his feet, saying, Not our will, but thine be done. Look forward to the rest which remains for his people, and go on your way rejoicing in the hope of the glory to be revealed.

Now, unto him who can keep you from falling, and can present you spotless before the throne ; to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XI.

THE LIVING TEMPLE,

ZECHARIAH vi. 13.

He shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory.

TO understand this portion of scripture, we must consider when the prediction was uttered, and to what it primarily refers.

Zechariah was the prophet whom God sent to the children of Israel, after seventy years captivity; when, by the permission of Cyrus, they returned to their own land, and began to rebuild the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem. Joshua was their high-priest, a man zealous for the honour, and faithful to the cause of God. He urged the captives, now restored to their native land, by every encouraging

encouraging motive, to carry forward the building of the temple; but, through the opposition of its enemies, and the poverty, timidity, and indolence of its friends, he beheld, with grief, that the work did not advance according to his wishes. He, and Zerubabel, the governor, had laid the foundations of the temple, but he dreaded that he never should see it finished; he was apprehensive, that when Zerubabel and he were no more, the temple of the Lord should be left neglected, and that the children of Israel would forsake the God of Zion, and return to worship the idols of Samaria.

To relieve his anxious mind, and to animate his soul with the prospect of happier days, the prophet Zechariah is sent with a special message from the Lord, to assure Joshua, that the temple should be built; that his fears were without foundation; that his prayers should be answered, and his utmost wishes accomplished.

That this heavenly message might be better understood, and more deeply impressed upon the mind, an outward sign was appointed to represent the events foretold.

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This sign was the coronation of Joshua; for him were to be made two crowns, the one of silver, and the other of gold. These were to be placed upon his head, as emblems of priesthood and royalty; and were then to be deposited in the temple, as memorials of what God had determined to accomplish in future times.

Thus were the minds of the children of Israel led to contemplate a more durable and glorious temple than that which they were building. In the language and symbols of prophecy, they were told, that the Messiah, whose name is the **BRANCH**, would be much more to this spiritual building, than Joshua was to their external temple; that he would sustain and fulfil, with perpetual efficacy and honour, the united offices of Priest and King, of Redeemer and Lawgiver, of Prince and Saviour; manifesting all the tenderness of a merciful **High-Priest**; while, vested with all the authority of an Omnipotent Sovereign, sitting and ruling, a Priest upon his throne; making all the acts of his kingly government subservient to the purposes of his redeeming grace. Thus would it be known to spirits
above,

above, and to saints on earth, that counsels of peace were held between the Father and the Son before time began; and that, by the union of the Mediatorial offices in the Messiah, those counsels, those amazing plans of salvation, are fulfilled, and glory ascribed in the highest to God and to the Lamb. “And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the **BRANCH**; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a Priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” What a rich variety of representation is here united, to fix, enlarge, and solemnize our meditations on him, whose death we are to commemorate! Every word impresses us with his transcendent excellence, and inestimable worth. When he humbled himself to appear in the nature of man, he seemed to be no more than a feeble stem from the root of Jesse. Yet this tender plant sprung up, and spread forth its branches, and became a sheltering to the weary, and still flourishes

flourishes with undecayed vigour ; the leaves whereof are for the healing of the nations ; and the fruit shall, I trust, on this occasion, be sweet to your taste.

It would lead me into a field of contemplation, by far too extensive, if I should attempt an illustration of all the delightful views, here given, of the Saviour ; and, therefore, to avoid detaining you from the peculiar services of this Communion Sabbath, let me, at present, direct your attention to that cheering promise, in the words of the text ; and may the God of ordinances grant, that while, in his strength, I attempt to unfold the meaning of this faithful saying, we may all experience its accomplishment, and be enabled, with humble gratitude, to say, that the temple of God is indeed with men on earth ; that God himself dwells with them, and is in them, and is their God.

In various passages of the New Testament, believers in Jesus are declared to be the temples of God ; temples of the Holy Ghost ; living temples, built up a spiritual house, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, through Christ. This is the view of the text, which, through divine assistance,

assistance, I would now illustrate; I. By considering every real Christian as the living temple of the Lord; II. By shewing that this spiritual temple is, in all respects, the workmanship of Christ; and, III. By reminding you, that on earth and in heaven, the promise is this day fulfilling, and will for ever be fulfilling, that he bears, and that he alone shall bear the glory.

I. Let me direct your attention to the dignified and distinguished character here ascribed to the righteous; namely, that each one of them is a temple of the Lord. This part of the subject may serve, through the divine blessing, to aid and enlarge our views of the nature, spirituality, and excellence of vital religion; and may enable intending communicants, to examine the reality and the progress of grace in their own souls.

A soul, the temple of God, suggests the sublime ideas of solemn consecration to his honour, of worship and sacrifice, of the divine residence, and of peculiar manifestations; such manifestations as discover a present

sent Deity, and render his glory in us evident to our souls.

1. Believers in Jesus are temples of the Lord, because they are separated from idolatry and impurity, are consecrated to sacred purposes, and are dedicated to the honour of him whom they worship.

The period was, when they impiously set up idols in their hearts, worshipped the mammon of this world, served lying vanities, and honoured the creature more than the Creator. But now, enlightened by the Spirit to know the glory of God in the face of Christ, and captivated to the supreme admiration of that God whom the gospel reveals; they pay to him their willing homage, and dedicate themselves, and all they are and have, to his direction, dominion, and disposal. Separated, by grace, from the maxims and manners of those who serve divers lusts and passions, their language is, Other lords have too long had dominion over us; the God of this world has too long blinded our minds; the time past is more than sufficient to have wrought the will of the flesh. Henceforth, we devote our body and spirit to thy glory; behold we come unto thee, for thou
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art our God: Yes, Lord, we sincerely give ourselves to be thine for ever; we lift up our hearts to thee, for thou alone art a satisfying portion; we put our trust in thee, for thou alone art a sure and all-sufficient refuge; and we prostrate ourselves before thy throne, for thou alone art the hearer of prayer, and giver of all good.

I entreat you, therefore, to examine yourselves impartially with respect to this matter; judge your own selves, that you may not be condemned in the day of the Lord. Are you separating yourselves more and more, through grace, from the governing influence of all your idols, corruptions, and abominations? Have you come out from a world lying in wickedness? Have you been brought to a God in Christ, as your exceeding joy? Have you given yourselves to the Lord? Have you opened to Him the doors of your hearts, that he may come in and abide with you, and that you may be to him for a name, and praise, and glory?

2. Believers in Christ are the temples of God, because they offer up to him dutiful worship, and acceptable sacrifice: Not such sacrifices as were offered in the temple of gold,

old, the blood of bulls and of goats, but sacrifices of righteousness, of praise, of prayer, of a broken and contrite heart, which the Lord will not despise: Not sacrifices of propitiation or atonement, which Jesus our great High-Priest alone could offer; but sacrifices of daily thank-offering for the mercies of God, and the blessings of his great salvation.

As every real Christian is a temple of the Lord, so every faculty and affection of his soul may be considered as engaged in the service of this living temple. The understanding pays its humble homage before the great Lord of all, and pours out confessions, prayers, and vows, before the altar and the mercy-seat, saying, in sincere and humble contrition, Lord, I have too long been blinded with pride, and passion, and prejudice, and unbelief; but now I joyfully submit to the authority of thine unerring word; I adore the wise and gracious scheme of salvation, which I formerly condemned as foolishness: I long for deliverance from ignorance and doubt; and implore, O Father of lights, to be more and more enlightened in the knowledge of the grand mysteries of godliness.

godliness. The will is engaged in reverence and godly fear, in bewailing its long alienation from its rightful Sovereign; yet affectionately grateful, for having at last been made the obedient subject of the Almighty; and fervently pleading, “Not my pleasure, but thine, O Lord, be at all times done.” The conscience, renewed by grace, and sprinkled by the blood of Jesus, is eager to give glory to God and the Lamb, for its release from blindness, hardness, and delusion; to implore fidelity in the Redeemer’s cause; and to offer its unwearied services, in restraining the tumults of inferior appetites, and in promoting the peaceful reign of pure religion. The affections are engaged in loving and blessing Him who sitteth on the throne, and the Lamb, who hath redeemed his own people with his blood, and the Spirit, who hath sanctified them. Their language is, “Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee more than all:” I stand in awe, and fear to offend. My confidence is placed in thee, O Lord, alone; I remember thee in the night-seasons, and with my spirit within me will I seek thee early; though the flock be cut off from the fold, yet will I rejoice in
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the God of my salvation. And then the united affections of a renewed mind join in one sublime anthem of adoration, "Whom have we in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth whom we desire besides thee!"

This sacred flame, which is kindled in the soul, extends its animating influence to what were the instruments of our vile affections, and brings those once hostile rebels, not only to lay down the weapons of their rebellion, but to reverence the God of Israel, and to consecrate their powers to his praise. Thus, the bodies of believers, as well as their immortal souls, become the temples of the Holy Ghost; their members become instruments of righteousness unto holiness; and they feel the influence of the love of Christ, constraining them to present their bodies living sacrifices to the Lord, which is their reasonable service.

Behold, then, this temple of the Lord in the soul of man! It is no longer a cage of unclean birds, or a sepulchre of dead bones, or a den of thieves; but a spiritual house, whose inhabitants are spiritual worshippers, offering up spiritual sacrifices, actuated by spiritual principles, deriving the highest de-
light

light from spiritual objects, employing themselves in the contemplation of God, the admiration of redeeming love, and preparation for future glory ; rising in their affections to the supreme love of God ; and preferring fellowship with him, above all animal gratifications, all the favours which mortals can bestow, and all the honour, pleasures, wealth, or intoxicating allurements of time and sense.

5. Believers in Christ are the temples of the Lord, because in them he resides, to manifest his glory ; and them he blesses with all the satisfying consolations of his presence.

That the God of the spirits of all flesh has continual access to the mind, might be proved from those evidences of divine operation which appear in all his works, through universal nature ; but the scriptures put this matter beyond a doubt, declaring that in him we live, and move ; that he gives to all life, and breath, and all things ; and that his merciful visitation preserves us every moment. In a peculiar manner, the scriptures testify, that God dwells in those who give their hearts to him ; that he fills all the
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treasures of their souls from his inexhaustible fulness; and he will be with them always, even unto the end. “If any man love me,” says Christ, “he will keep my commandments, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him:” and to the same purpose we read in another part of scripture, “Ye are the temples of the living God; and he hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and be their God, and they shall be my people.”

In various respects, he fills the temple of the soul with his presence, and dwells there. For in every renewed person, much of the image of God is displayed; the power of God, in forming, from such unlikely materials, a new creature, or new creation; the holiness of God, in stamping upon every child of the family some lineaments of their Father’s image; and the sovereign mercy of God, in rescuing from deepest ruin, and imparting the noblest hopes and happiness, to the praise of the glory of his grace.

Thus, in all real saints, so far as they are sanctified, we may trace some resemblance of God. His name is in their foreheads; they are the fairest copy of him in the visible creation;

creation ; and their views, their sentiments, their dispositions, and their delights, not only assimilate in their measure to those of the adoring angels above, but bear witness that God is in them of a truth. O that it might be thus with us ! that we might be partakers of the divine image, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness ; that the divine perfections might be more visible in our dispositions, the divine character more legible, divine impressions more lively, and the divine life more active !

Again, God is said to dwell in his people as his temple, when he manifests his glory to them, and admits them to delightful intercourse with himself. This honour have all the saints ; but it is enjoyed by them in very different degrees, according to the measure of their faith. Sometimes they draw near with anxiety and apprehension. Even then, however, they experience an inward relief in prayer, in looking unto Jesus, and in the promises of a faithful God, which secretly and inexpressibly bear up their fainting minds. At other and happier times, their fears, trials, and cares, are all forgotten in the sure evidences they obtain, that this

God is their God for ever and ever. Then they can freely commune with him of all that is in their heart ; can order their cause before him, and fill their mouths with arguments. Then, also, the Lord whom they seek draws nigh to them, with such smiles of his countenance, such discoveries of his loveliness, such full conviction of his all-sufficiency, as silence their fears, ravish their souls, and annihilate the world in their estimation. Then it is that they see the glory of God, and hear his voice, and hold most blessed fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost :—the everlasting Father saying unto them, I will be a Father unto you, and all I have is thine ; and their hearts replying, Abba, Father, thou art our dwelling-place in all generations ; in thee we have all, and abound ; our Father who art in heaven, thy will be done by us on earth ;—the Redeemer saying, I have clothed thee with the robes of my righteousness, and covered thee with the garment of my salvation ; and their hearts replying, Thou art altogether lovely in our estimation ; our souls do magnify the Lord, and our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour, whom having
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not seen, we love ; we are not our own, but bought with a price ; let us therefore glorify thee in soul, body, and spirit ;—the Holy Ghost saying, I will not leave you comfortless, but will abide with you continually ; and their hearts replying, Come, Holy Spirit, with all thy sacred influences ; lead us into all truth, make us a peculiar people, and conduct us to the land of uprightness.

This delightful communion with God as their God, with each person in the sacred Trinity, with every perfection of Deity, as engaged in their behalf, is heaven begun on earth, and is enjoyed by humble believers, sometimes in private devotions, sometimes in public ordinances, and sometimes in the common duties and occurrences of life. When enjoyed, their views of divine subjects are greatly enlarged ; their faith triumphs over all opposition ; their love kindles into new ardours ; their hopes ascend to heaven ; and, like the adoring worshippers in the temple above, they are filled with deepest humility, while admitted to familiar intercourse with the God of glory.

II. Having shewn that every renewed
soul

soul is the temple of the Lord, we proceed to remind you, that this temple is, in all respects, the workmanship of the adorable Redeemer. He whose name is the BRANCH, who fulfils the counsels of peace, who sits and rules as a Priest upon his throne,—he builds the temple,

1. In his mediation between God and man.

The soul of man, in its original state, was the perfection of all the works of God on earth, and a subject of contemplation for the angels of God in heaven; but in its fallen state, it is a temple in ruins; its glory is defaced, its light is changed into darkness, its purity into defilement, and its divine inhabitant is departed.

To give to man his original glory, to restore to him the divine image, and to make him fit for the divine residence, was the arduous work which the Son of God undertook to accomplish. For this purpose he became our Surety, assumed our nature, yielded a most willing obedience to all the demands of the divine law, and atoned for our guilt, by dying as a sacrifice in the room of sinners. Thus he satisfied all the demands

demands of divine justice, manifested the infinite perfections of God's immutable holiness, purchased the influences of the Holy Spirit for the effectual regeneration and sanctification of apostate creatures ; rendered it consistent with the honour of God to hold converse with men ; and rendered men on earth capable of enjoying these divine manifestations, which they forfeited by sin.

Our glorious Redeemer triumphed over death and hell in his resurrection, and ascended into heaven as Head over all things for his church. He there carries on the grand mediatory scheme, rules in the kingdom of providence and grace, and sends forth his ministering servants to proclaim his great salvation ; to gather the outcasts and perishing into his church ; and to prepare men by the knowledge and faith of the gospel, for being living temples of the true God. Thus, all obstacles are removed, the ground cleared, the workmen furnished with proper materials, the scaffolding provided, and all things ready for rearing the spiritual edifice.

What an amazing scheme of wisdom and mercy is the mediation of Christ ! It brings good will to men on earth, and glory to
God

God in the highest ; it repairs the ruins of the fall, and makes all things new ; it unites angels and men in friendship, worship, and employment ; it demolishes the altars of unrighteousness, and kindles a pure incense to God, both on earth and in heaven.

2. He lays the foundation of the spiritual temple, by bestowing that living faith which unites us to himself, and interests us in all the blessings of his mediation ; or rather, he is the foundation, and brings his chosen people, through the faith of the operation of his Spirit, to rest their everlasting hopes upon him alone. He sweeps away all other grounds of trust, and shews them that nothing else but his own righteousness can found their title to eternal glory. Convinced of sin, anxious for reconciliation, destitute of merit in themselves, rescued from vain dependence on empty forms or inward frames, and knowing that Jesus declared from his excellent glory, “ Behold, I lay in Zion a foundation, elect and precious,” they here fix, they here find sure footing, they here found all their dependence, they here build for eternity ; firmly persuaded that this immoveable foundation can well sustain all the

the weight which mortals lay upon it. Other foundation can no man lay, for pardon, for restoration, for holiness, or heaven. If any are accepted before God, it is in the Beloved; if redeemed, it is by the blood of Jesus; if renewed and revived, it is by being quickened together with Christ; and if raised into a spiritual building from the ruins of apostacy, it is by being created in Christ unto good works, which God hath fore-ordained that we should walk in them.

5. He not only lays the foundation of the spiritual temple, but he rears the superstructure by his grace and Spirit.

Consider what is meant by the superstructure; contemplate it as rising into view from the firm foundation on which it rests; trace with admiration its gradual progress, until it becomes a regular and stately edifice of heavenly graces and holy duties, compactly built together, and inseparably connected; each strengthening each, and at the same time contributing to the beauty of the whole.

It is thus you will form some idea of what is meant by the superstructure of the living temple. Religion does not consist

in one solitary grace detached from the rest, but it is an assemblage of excellencies meeting together, and forming one complete whole. The faith which rests on Christ for salvation does not stand alone, but produces that love to the Saviour which enlarges the heart to run in the way of his commandments, and leads his servants to hate sin with a perfect hatred, and to cherish godly sorrow for past transgressions, together with habitual watchfulness against future deviations from the path of duty. Hence arises the warmest gratitude to the Redeemer, who procured their pardon, who purchased grace to help in every time of need, and who gives his Holy Spirit to sanctify and comfort them.

Persuaded of these promises, believers lay aside every weight, and exercise themselves in active diligence in the ways of God. Though opposed by earth and hell, yet, being strong in the faith, they hold on their way rejoicing; though meeting with many discouragements, yet they are patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer; though encountering many temptations, yet the grace which brings salvation, teaches them
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to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts ; and enables them to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present evil world ; nay, to look for the glorious appearing of the great God their Saviour, to pass the time of their sojourning in fear, to work the work of God while it is called to-day ; and to make the light of a humble, meek, exemplary conduct so to shine before men, that others, seeing their good works, may glorify their heavenly Father.

Thus, every grace and duty of religion is a living stone in that temple which every believer is rearing unto God on earth. All these graces and duties are intimately connected, and, by their union, the spiritual building is rendered fair and useful. All its parts are so framed and adjusted, as to excite the admiration of angels, as to animate the devotion of their fellow-worshippers, and even sometimes to command the reverence of the wicked.

Were believers living continually under the influence of that heavenly religion, which they believe, and profess to love, their progress would appear to all, and the spiritual building would rapidly advance in beauty
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and magnificence. But, alas! this progress is marred by many unexpected obstacles, and the beauty of the superstructure is blemished, by wood, hay, and stubble, mingling with its proper materials. Original corruption, evil habits, sinful compliances, and deep-rooted prejudices, produce inconsistent appearances in the most perfect saint on earth, obscure the light of the temple, and interrupt the melody of its songs.

But the enemies of this divine temple shall not prevail against it; nor shall they always triumph over its breaches, nor be always permitted to retard or suspend the progress of the work; for I remark,

4. That the Almighty Builder carries on to perfection the good work which he has begun.

If you beheld a large and stately building rising into view, where formerly there was nothing but rubbish and ruins; if you were informed that this building is highly important and necessary, that it had been planned with much deliberation and wisdom, and that no small expense was laid out in preparing materials for the work; you would naturally conclude, that since it is now begun,

gun, and daily advancing, that it will in due time be completed, provided the builder has skill, wisdom, power, and means sufficient for finishing it.

Apply all this to the subject before us. The infinitely wise God our Saviour, who possesses all power in heaven and earth, has formed the grand design of recovering sinners from their apostacy, and of preparing them for heaven. He has, at astonishing expense, provided means for accomplishing this great end. He has, through the influences of his grace, begun to operate in the hearts of his chosen in the world, so that the outlines of their future perfections already appear: and will he, after all this, withhold such farther degrees of grace, as are necessary to bring this good work to perfection? This would be inconsistent with his compassion and power. He has redeemed his people by his blood, and declares, that he will keep what is committed to him; that having begun in them a good work, he will carry it forward to the day of Christ. He has pledged himself, by his engagements to his people in the covenant of grace; and these engagements he will fulfil by his dispensations

pensations and ordinances, with the co-operating influences of his Holy Spirit.

By his dispensations, he carries forward the perfection of his people. Sometimes, for polishing the stones of the temple, or rendering this temple itself more beautiful and beneficial, he finds it necessary to use the sharp instrument of adverse providences; therefore he visits his people sometimes with pinching poverty, painful distresses, or agonizing bereavement. Yet these sufferings of his chosen, though severe, unexpected, or long continued, are not vindictive judgements to believers in Jesus, nor evidences of wrath, nor forerunners of future woe; but the salutary discipline of wisdom and love, the trials of faith and submission, the preparatives for heaven, the seasons of divine interposition, and divine manifestation.—Hence all things shall work together for their good; neither height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In like manner, he carries on his people to perfection by the ordinances of his grace. In secret prayer, in this sacred volume, in
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the sanctuary, and at the communion-table, the Lord is present with his people, to impart light, life, stability, and consolation; to dispel their doubts; to strengthen their faith; and so to invigorate every grace, that they may perform with readiness those duties, and may meet with calmness, and sustain with patience, those trials which seemed beyond their power; may surmount difficulties which threatened to overwhelm them; and may reach real attainments, which once they thought it arrogance to aspire after: "Fear not, worm Jacob, I will help thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."

But, in a peculiar manner, he carries his people forward to perfection, by the powerful energy and gracious influences of his Holy Spirit, working in them to will and to do of his good pleasure, sealing them to the day of redemption, leading them into all truth, and sanctifying them more and more, until, by gradual advances in holiness, they are fitted for the enjoyment of heaven. When fully prepared, he releases them from all the incumbrances of mortality, crowns them with immortal glory, and puts on the
last

last stone with shoutings of Grace unto it. Then, with increasing and everlasting joy, shall the universal song of triumph ascend to him who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his blood, and redeemed them to God out of every kindred, and brought them out of great tribulation, and conducted them to the land of uprightness, where the Lamb shall be the light of the temple, and where the glory of the Lord shall lighten it for ever and ever.

III. We now proceed to shew, that the cheering and animating promise, “He shall bear the glory,” is now fulfilling on earth, and shall be fulfilled for ever in heaven.

In following out the meditations in which we have been indulging, and in applying the text to this part of the subject, it would be profitable to consider the various dispensations by which the Lord has led his children; remembering, in a peculiar manner, his gracious dealings with their souls; recollecting when, and where, and how, by what word, or providence, or ordinance, they were first awakened, to ask, with deep solicitude, what they should do to be saved; how

how they were filled with peace of soul, by believing in Jesus, after trembling under the terror of divine wrath ; how they have been carried, by means of duties and trials, to the glory of the grace of God ; how they were revived after the hiding of his countenance, and restored to the joy of his salvation ; how they have often contemplated death and eternity with triumph, by knowing that their Redeemer lives, and will keep what they have committed to his hands. One says, to the praise of the grace of Christ, He has opened the eyes of my understanding, and given me to perceive how so unworthy and perishing a creature may be redeemed from destruction, restored to the friendship of an offended God, and made glad with the light of his countenance. Another says, to the praise of the grace of Christ, He has enabled me to triumph in the well-grounded persuasion, that a holy God has turned away his anger, and has become my trust, and strength, and joy ; that he has accepted me in the Beloved, adopted me into his family, and called me to rejoice in his well-ordered covenant, in his faithful promises, and in the bright prospects

spects of the glory to be revealed. Another says, to the praise of the grace of Christ, He has reclaimed my wanderings, and healed my backslidings, when I was dealing perfidiously ; he restored me to a life of faith, and fellowship, and obedience ; taught me to run without weariness in his blessed word, and to walk without fainting ; made me superior to surrounding temptations ; that, having overcome the world, I may go from strength to strength, until I appear perfect before God in Zion.

Amidst these meditations, at every new survey, they feel their hearts warmed with wonder and gratitude, and say, Not unto us, not unto us. Bless the Lord, our souls, and forget not all his benefits. He hath built the temple, and he shall bear the glory.

In like manner, it would be pleasant and profitable, were we permitted to consider those children of God, translated from the church militant to the church triumphant, and, from the height of Zion, looking down upon the wilderness through which they have sojourned, comparing the past with their happy celestial condition, and, thus employed,

employed, saying, with growing rapture, Is this indeed the blessed issue of our faith, and hope, and tears, and labour of love? Is this the blessed consequence of the Spirit's teaching, and leading, and influence? Was it hither the Saviour was conducting our souls, by all the communications of his grace, and all the dispensations of his providence? Happy was the way, and glorious is the end! Now we know how far better it is to be with Christ, than to remain in the world. Means, ordinances, Sabbaths, sacraments, ye have done your part; ye have conducted us from stage to stage of our wilderness journey, and now we are brought to God himself, our exceeding joy; we stand now in no more need of your friendly aid. Trials, we acquit you of every charge of severity; once ye were grievous, but now joyous; now you are exchanged for an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory. This everlasting inheritance which we now enjoy, is thy purchase, blessed Immanuel! this is the fulfilment of all thy promises; this is the consummation of thy gracious and thy wondrous work.

And, brethren, could we at this moment

penetrate within the vail, we would hear the ransomed of the Lord saying one to another, and to listening angels, Yonder, on his radiant throne, is the best beloved of our souls, who rescued us from guilt and ruin, raised us to this perfect happiness, renewed us by his grace while we were on earth, and proved our stedfast friend in every tribulation and trial. To him be glory in the highest! All we had and have, all we were and are, all we enjoyed and now enjoy, we entirely owe to his free, disinterested, and sovereign love. Long we despised his tenderest instructions, and scorned his richest offers; but his triumphant grace subdued our pride and rebellion, brought us to spiritual life, and gave us power to become the sons of God. Nor then did he desert our feeble souls, but sanctified them by his truth, conducted them through dangerous snares, comforted them when cast down, succoured them when tempted, and enabled us to finish our course in the triumphs of faith.

While we remember what we once were, and rejoice in what we now are, we will exclaim, Hosanna in the highest! Not unto us, not unto us, but to thyself alone, O Lord,

Lord, be the unrivalled honour! And through the stages of an immortal life, we will not cease to ascribe blessing and dominion to him who sitteth on the throne, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom be glory in the highest for ever and ever.

Let such meditations animate your devotion in all the services of this day; and now that you have so near a prospect of sitting at a communion-table, keep in view the high dignity to which you are called, to be temples of the living God, through the Lord Jesus Christ. Separate yourselves, therefore, from all iniquity of flesh and spirit; consecrate yourselves, body and spirit, to the glory of God; and earnestly plead, that he may this day dwell in you, and be with you, and be your God, and manifest himself to you, as he does not unto the world. Amen.

SERMON XII.

HEAVEN PREPARED FOR THE RIGHTEOUS.

HEB. xi. 16.

But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.

THE change of his views and pursuits which every sincere lover of the Saviour experiences, when born again by the Spirit, and effectually renewed by grace, is easily distinguished in his character and conduct. He formerly had no concern about a future state. Like the men of the world, he sought

sought his happiness in those earthly enjoyments which cannot satisfy an immortal soul; “but now,” says the apostle, “he desires a better country, that is, an heavenly.” Beholding the fashion of this world passing away, he considers himself as a pilgrim on earth. Setting his affections on things above, he is chiefly employed in preparing himself for the inheritance of the saints in light; and knowing that his departure is drawing nigh, he gives all diligence to be found of God in peace, to have his conversation in heaven, and to live under the powers of the world to come.

But, leaving out of view for a moment the promise and prospect of a future inheritance, and of immortality beyond the grave, the children of God in this world have privileges conferred upon them, greatly superior to all human dignity and honour. Amidst the vicissitudes and trials of life, they have the Almighty himself for their all-sufficient portion, for their unchanging Friend, and reconciled Father.

He loves them with the tenderest affection, cherishes them as his children, and imparts to them whatever can satisfy the
mind,

mind, or carry it on to perfection. To him we are indebted for the watchful protection of his providence, the suitable promises of his word, the comforting fellowship of his Spirit, the liberty of intrusting all our interests to his unerring management, the gratifying assurance that he will order our concerns aright, and for such enlivening declarations as these, “Fear not, I have redeemed thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God; I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”

Blessed be the God of salvation, for the unsearchable riches and perpetual duration of his love! The present privileges of his people are inestimably valuable, and their future prospects are glorious, and without end. They have desired a better country, and that desire shall not be ungratified; for he who is their God has prepared for them a city; and had it not been so, we have the remarkable words of the text, that he would have been ashamed to call himself their God. This is indeed a wonderful declaration; it intimates, that all the love which he manifests to his people on earth, is only an earnest of what is in reserve; that all
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the repeated instances of pardon, and unmerited supplies of grace, all the ravishing joys of faith, and all the near intercourses with our God enjoyed here, are only as first-fruits of the future harvest; and that, if no better blessings were to be bestowed hereafter, our heavenly Father would not have called the righteous his own peculiar people, nor himself their God and Father.

It is to the last part of this verse we would chiefly direct your attention, viz. that God hath prepared for them a city. And to enable you to enter into proper meditations on this delightful subject, it is proposed, through divine assistance, to illustrate the three following particulars: I. To lay before you the evidence and proof, that our God has indeed prepared for his people an inheritance beyond the grave. II. To remind you, that this future inheritance is styled in our text, a city and a country, better and heavenly, with the intention of animating and encouraging Christians in their progress thither. III. To shew you, that to desire this city aright, and to live in the daily expectation of the future bliss, is a matter

matter of high importance to real Christians, and essentially connected with their growth in every grace.

I. We have proposed to lay before you the proof that our God has prepared for his people a future and heavenly habitation.

1. Divine revelation brings immortality to light. This sacred volume makes it certain, that when the duties and trials of this life are finished, a future state of perfect and perpetual happiness awaits the children of God.

Nothing less than a divine revelation can fully ascertain this important truth; for, though arguments derived from other sources may be suggested, yet they derive all their energy, influence, and credibility, from the record of God in scripture.

The slightest survey of these arguments may convince you, that of themselves they are insufficient to satisfy the serious, or to support the afflicted mind.

We wish for immortality, and grasp after attainments in knowledge and happiness, not to be enjoyed on earth. Conscious of possessing faculties superior to the beasts of the
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the field, man naturally infers, that his existence and duration cannot be limited to the uncertain term of this transitory life.

Thus, from the noble powers of the human soul, we form some probable conjecture that there is a future state of being, far more perfect than the present.

But, besides these capacities of mankind for perpetual improvement, a persuasion that God himself governs the world in righteousness, and that mankind are accountable to him for their conduct, increases the conviction that there will be an hereafter, a state of future retribution, where the impenitent will be punished, and where the righteous will be held in everlasting remembrance. On earth, the worthiest part of mankind seem to struggle with the weightiest load of sorrows; while, to human view, obstinate transgressors enjoy an unclouded sunshine, and are not plagued like the children of affliction.

How then can we preserve on our minds dignified ideas of divine justice, unless we look forward to a period, when all the present inequalities of Providence will be explained and vindicated, both by the punishment

ment of the ungodly, and by the happy recompence of the saints.

Such are the pleasing conjectures of thinking men, but they are too speculative to comfort those who mourn, or to influence the conduct of selfish mortals.

Thanks to the God of all grace, we have a surer word of prophecy, and a firmer foundation for our faith, hope, and strong consolation!

This everlasting gospel has brought immortality to light, and has given the servants of God to know that this is not their home; that there remaineth a rest for the people of God; and that in his presence there is fulness of joy, nay, pleasures for evermore.

On this immoveable foundation, namely the revelation and power of God, rests their assured prospect of everlasting existence. Standing on this firm ground, they review the rugged steps of the wilderness which they have already trodden; and, lifting up their longing eyes to the hills of Zion, they look beyond what is seen and temporal, and bless the God and Father of their Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten them to the hope of an incorruptible inheritance.

2. That

2. That the God of our salvation has prepared a city of habitation for the saints beyond the grave, appears evidently from the design of our Saviour's sufferings, and the infinite merit of his atoning sacrifice. His blood was the price paid for their heavenly inheritance, and by dying, he obtained their eternal redemption.

Though these lively oracles of truth clearly testify the certainty of a state of everlasting happiness beyond the grave, still the inquiry occurs, How shall mankind be entitled to the enjoyment of the heavenly kingdom? Their apostacy from God exposes them to final condemnation, and renders them by nature children of wrath; like the flaming sword, it bars their entrance into paradise; or, like the mighty gulph mentioned in the parable of Lazarus, it excludes degenerate men from admission to the heavenly mansions. Can it be otherwise, while the descendants of Adam remain in their unrenewed state of guilt and depravity? Must not a God of infinite holiness refuse to admit into immediate intercourse with himself, ungrateful mortals, who still rebel against their Almighty Maker? Must not the infinite

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nite perfection of his nature, the glorious attribute of Divine Justice, and the regards due to the divinity of his government, demand full satisfaction from the transgressors of his law? Must not the fallen and guilty be deemed highly presumptuous, to hope for heaven, while they are unable to satisfy offended justice?

Here, then, we meet with obstacles in our way to heaven; and with such discouragements arising from guilt, depravity, and helplessness, as would have banished every ray of hope, had not the Son of God become our Surety, atoned for our sins, and opened an everlasting way of access to the presence of the Father.

Glory to God in the highest, this Saviour is himself the way: he died for the unjust, and satisfied those demands which offending creatures never could have answered; he has removed the awful threatening against fallen mankind, that they should never enter into future rest; has substituted in its room a sure title to eternal life, and has rendered it consistent with the claims and the honour of the divine government, to justify, to adopt, and glorify the chief of sinners; to
save

save to the uttermost them who return to God, and accept of his offered salvation.

Heaven is therefore styled in scripture, a “purchased possession;” not obtained by the poor exertions, or imperfect services of feeble creatures; not claimed on the footing of merit; not bargained for with such corruptible things as silver or gold; but purchased with the price of blood, infinitely precious blood, the blood of Christ, shed for the remission of the sins of many, that being justified through faith in his blood, they may have peace with God, and may rejoice in the hopes of glory.

That unfading heavenly kingdom, procured by this adorable Mediator, at this costly price, belongs of right to him; and as heir of all things, he hath graciously and freely made over this purchased possession to all his humble followers by his own irreversible testament; saying, I make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David; I give my sheep eternal life, and none can pluck them out of my hand: If ye are Christ's, all is yours, things present and to come: Ye are the children of God through faith in Christ; and if children, then

then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

Thus, heaven is the inheritance of all true believers, to which they become entitled by the gift or testament of that Saviour upon whom their trust is placed, and who hath all power to give eternal life to whom he will.

Is it then any wonder, that the saints in heaven are represented as ascribing all praise and honour to the Lamb who was slain, and who washed them from their sins in his own blood, and made them kings and priests to God! How intense, my brethren, must be their admiration of that wondrous Saviour, by whose sovereign grace they are rescued from unutterable woe, and are brought to the possession of an inheritance in glory which fadeth not away! With what animating gratitude will they encourage each other in celebrating the riches of this Redeemer's love! and with what growing rapture will they tell to listening angels what he did for their souls! Often on earth we admired the divine patience, in permitting us to live in his world, in giving us bread to eat, and raiment to put on; but how can we sufficiently

ciently adore that sovereign goodness which has exalted us to this perfect, never-ending state of purest bliss? How often did we dread that direful condemnation which our sins deserved! but now we triumph in the sure possession of happiness immortal as our existence. To thee, O Almighty Saviour, be the unrivalled praise! for thou hast purchased us with thy blood, and kept us by thy power, and brought us to glory.

3. We remark, that as our Lord Jesus Christ, by the shedding of his own blood, has purchased the heavenly inheritance for his people, so his resurrection from the dead is a sure pledge of their eternal triumphs over death and the grave.

When he was made perfect through his sufferings, it was to bring many sons and daughters to glory: When he ascended up on high, it was to prepare mansions for his people: And when he shall come the second time, it will be to raise their sleeping dust, to honour them before assembled worlds, and to present them to the Father with exceeding great joy, that they may inherit the kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the world.

Thus, all that the Redeemer has done, and all that he is doing, proclaims to his followers, that there remaineth a rest for the people of God ; that it is not in this life only they have hope ; that for them to die will be unspeakable gain.

But in contemplating the mediatory work of Christ, no part of it gives greater vigour to our future hopes, than his resurrection from the dead.

This is the argument so fully stated in the 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians, and so worthy of our serious attention. The substance of the argument seems to be this : As Jesus suffered death for us in the character of surety and substitute, so his resurrection is the evidence that his work is accomplished, that the ransom of his people is paid, the payment accepted, the discharge given, the Surety released from prison, and those for whom he satisfied, delivered from the bondage and danger to which they were exposed. Again ; as Jesus rose in the character of the head and representative of his followers, it is a just conclusion, that death is conquered in their behalf ; they cannot therefore continue under the dominion of death, but will
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be raised up to the resurrection of eternal life; for why should it seem a thing incredible, that God will raise the dead, seeing he hath brought again the great Shepherd of the sheep? Therefore, if Christ is risen, so they who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him; if the head lives for ever, his members shall live also; if the first-born be raised up, his brethren will not sleep in corruption; if the first-fruits be gathered in, the full harvest will follow.

For ever blessed, then, be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to the lively hope of an incorruptible inheritance reserved in heaven for all his redeemed, who are kept by his mighty power through faith to his great salvation! Then this mortal shall put on immortality, and death be swallowed up in victory.

We can now in some measure apprehend the import of that memorable saying which he left with his disconsolate disciples, as their noblest support under their trials: "I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again and receive you to myself, that

where I am ye may be also." Now, also, we may adopt the Christian triumph of the apostle, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through Christ our Lord."

4. That there remains a city of habitation prepared for the righteous in Christ, may be proved from many plain promises of scripture, given by him who cannot lie, and yielding strong consolation to those who have fled to the Saviour. He not only reveals to mankind that there are many mansions in heaven, and that the saints may peradventure inhabit these glorious abodes, but he pledges his veracity, that not one of them shall be lost: Hence says the inspired apostle, when writing to Titus, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, in hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie hath promised *." We have the promise of God! a God who *cannot* lie. Here is a sure foundation of faith, which can never fail, and which nothing but unbelief itself can undervalue.

* Titus i, 2.

value. That this unbelief may be silenced, a faithful and gracious God has sworn by himself, that he will not lie unto his people, or, as the apostle expresses it, will repent him never, nor alter the thing which hath gone out of his lips; for, being willing to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, he hath confirmed it with an oath; that is, he hath solemnly appealed to his own unchangeable attributes, for the accomplishment of his faithful declarations. Be not, then, of a doubtful mind, nor say, in the unbelief of your heart, How can these things be? for with our God nothing is impossible, and what he has promised shall be accomplished.

The promises of everlasting glory, thus sealed and confirmed, are neither few nor obscure, but numerous, important, and plain: I will be your guide unto death, and your God for ever and ever. Ye shall be mine in the day I make up my jewels. The ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs; everlasting joy shall be on their head; sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and the days of their mourning shall be ended. The gift of God is eternal life, through Christ
Jesus

Jesus our Lord. Whosoever believeth on the Son hath eternal life, and shall not come into condemnation. Of all that the Father hath given me, I will lose none, but will raise him at the last day. We would not have you ignorant concerning them that are asleep, that ye sorrow not as those who have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so they also that sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him; so shall we be ever with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.

Men and brethren, make those multiplied faithful promises of an unchanging God the subject of your meditations. Believe them already fulfilled in the confirmed happiness of the saints and faithful who have gone before you. In the belief of this fulfilment, contemplate the ten thousand times ten thousand, who have entered into the joy of their Lord; and thence for your own consolation conclude, that, if through faith and patience I am a follower of those who are inheriting the promises, I also shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever; I also shall at death be made perfect in holiness, and pass immediately into glory, and be
completely

completely blessed in the full enjoyment of God through all eternity.

Therefore humble believers in Jesus say, in the full prospect of dissolution, with the Corinthian converts, “ We know, that when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens *.” These Corinthian converts had no recommendatory title to heaven, from what they were in themselves, or from works of righteousness which they had done ; once they were as far from the kingdom of heaven as the most humble among you can think yourselves to be ; their sins as numerous, and their corruptions as strong, as yours ; but he who takes away the sins of the world, washed them from their sins, justified them from their guilt, and sanctified them by his Spirit, and enabled them to rejoice in the hope of the glory to be revealed. That hope did not arise from their attainments, but from the unalterable promises of him who alone has the words of eternal life. His offers of mercy, and his riches of
grace,

* 2 Cor. v. 2.

grace, are equally free to your dejected souls; come, therefore, to him as you are by nature, spiritually poor, naked, and blind, for whatever blessings your circumstances require, and for all that he has purchased and promised. Be earnest in supplication, that he who has saved even the chief of sinners, may save you with an everlasting salvation; and seek ye to be plucked as brands from the burning, and begotten, by the resurrection of Christ, to the lively hope of that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading; reserved in heaven for all who are the called of the Lord.

Under this head of discourse, we have endeavoured to remind you, that the prospect of future felicity is no delusive imagination, but a sure and substantial blessing; that happiness in heaven is clearly revealed in scripture; is purchased by the blood of Jesus, is secured by his resurrection and continual mediation, and is the inheritance of the righteous in Christ, by plain immutable promises, which have already been fulfilled in the happy experience of many millions who have come out of great tribulation, who
have

have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, who are now before the throne, and shall be with the Lord for ever and ever.

May this be the happy lot of us all, and to redeeming love and sovereign grace be the unrivalled glory! Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

HEAVEN PREPARED FOR THE RIGHTEOUS.

HEB. xi. 16.

But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.

HAVING illustrated the certainty of the future happiness of believers, we now proceed, as we proposed,

II. To contemplate that future abode of the saints as a better and an heavenly city.

So long as the children of God continue on earth, they sustain the character of pilgrims travelling through a foreign land, far distant

distant from their native home ; or rather wandering through a dreary desert, where they are subjected to many wants, and exposed to many dangers.

This comparison of heaven to a city prepared for the righteous, includes rest from all the fatigues of their journey, from whatever occasioned uneasiness, or prevented their constant enjoyment of God while in the wilderness of this world.

A city also implies society and fellowship, and leads forward our contemplations to the happy intercourse of the glorified above, to the society of pure and perfect spirits, to the company of those who are redeemed out of all nations, and to uninterrupted fellowship with Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and with God, the Judge of all.

Again, this comparison of heaven to a city implies safety and privilege ; it reminds us, that in heaven there can be nothing to hurt or destroy, no tempter nor temptation, and neither sorrow nor sighing : “ Violence shall not be heard in thy land, nor destruction within thy borders ; thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise ; thy
people

people also shall be all righteous, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified *.”

Finally, heaven is styled a city, to distinguish it from the tents in which travellers lodge for a night, and to denote the perpetuity of future happiness; a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God; an inheritance undefiled, and a kingdom which fadeth not away. The future happiness of the redeemed shall never come to a termination, but be ever new, ever undiminished, nay, ever growing through millions of millions of ages! Ages! have I said? What have ages to do with eternity? Ages imply time, and time implies change; but your perfect bliss, O glorified spirit! shall be without interruption and without end!

Come, then, ye heavenly travellers! from this sacred mount of ordinances, behold yonder better country to which you are travelling; “lift up your eyes,” as said the angel to Abraham, “and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward, east and

* Isa. lx. 18. 21.

and west ; nay, walk the land in the length and breadth of it, for unto thee will I give it *.”

Christian brethren ! let us animate our steps, by viewing the glories of the city which our God has prepared, and where we hope ere long to arrive.

Can you conceive any happiness equal to the immediate enjoyment of the great God our Saviour ; of having every power engaged in the admiration of his unveiled excellence ; in the review of all his dispensations ; and in the unceasing praises of the grace he so freely conferred ?

This will constitute a part of the employment above. We shall dwell with the Lord ; we shall see him as he is ; we shall be satisfied with his presence ; we shall admire the wisdom and propriety of the darkest, severest, and most mysterious dispensations of his providence ; and we shall ascribe glory in the highest to that adorable Saviour, who brought us through so many tribulations, washed us from our sins, guided us by his counsel, comforted us at death,
raised

* Gen. xiii, 14.—17.

raised us from the dead, confessed us before assembled worlds, and received us to his glory.

Again ; can you conceive any joy equal to what must be experienced, when all the saints are placed beyond the possibility of temptation, sorrow, and sighing, of pain and death ; when their many trials will only be remembered to increase their joy ; when the afflictions of this life will be exchanged for an eternal weight of glory ; when death itself shall be swallowed up in victory ; and when this corruptible frame has put on incorruption and immortality ?

Say, men and brethren, do not you feel an ardent wish to be fully prepared for mingling with that glorious society above ? Are you not striving to enter in at the strait gate ? Are you not giving all diligence to work out your salvation, laying hold on eternal life, and aspiring after the full perfection of future transcendent bliss ? May this be the happy effect of having called your attention to the rest which remains for the people of God, to the contemplation of that glorious city which our God has prepared for the faithful, to which your wishes
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and your hopes should daily be directed, and in which your supreme desires should entirely centre!

Let it be farther remarked, that our text styles these heavenly mansions, which the Holy One of Israel has prepared, a better and heavenly country. These titles of commendation and distinction lead our thoughts to the pleasing comparison and contrast between the present and future state of the saints. Every enjoyment here, however good in itself, is earthly, or mingled with much imperfection, frailty, and decay; all beyond is heavenly, and therefore far better; the place is better, the society is better, the employments are better.

The place allotted for the future residence of the faithful in Christ, is far better than this earth which they inhabit. This is indeed a goodly world, and it exhibits a sublime manifestation of the wisdom, power, and goodness of its great Creator; yet its evening shades and midnight darkness, its famine and pestilence, its lightnings and tempests, remind us that it is earth, and tending to dissolution.

But your future abode, O humble Christian!

tian! can never be subject to those changes and commotions; to dreary nights, or setting suns; to threatening skies, to lowering clouds, or dreadful storms: "I saw," says John, "the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven; and the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: and there shall be no night there; and they need not the light of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof*." If this world is so fair and noble a fabric, how glorious must heaven be! This world was created to continue only for the period of a few revolving ages, and to be the abode of creatures who, an omniscient God foresaw, would soon violate his commands, and incur his indignation; whereas heaven is the residence of angels and archangels, of cherubim and seraphim; prepared by the God of infinite wisdom to be a suitable and perpetual abode for the selected objects of his everlasting love.

We next remark, that heaven is styled a better region with respect to society. Contemplate

* Rev. xxi.

template what unutterable happiness must flow from an intercourse with just men made perfect ; when all the ransomed of the Lord shall hold delightful fellowship together, and will tell what God has done for them and theirs ; when they who, amidst many imperfections, worshipped together on earth, and prayed, and watched, and wept together, shall unite in celestial songs of unceasing praise ; when they, who on earth were companions in tribulation, in labours, in dangers, and in duties, shall share together the happiness and the honours of the heavenly kingdom ; when the vast multitudes redeemed from wrath and ruin, through the blood of the Lamb, shall testify how much they were debtors to that matchless Saviour, whose grace they long resisted, whose dying love they long despised, whose unwearied patience they long abused, and whose endearing offers they continued to scorn ; how he himself subdued their unbelief, and brought them to the light of spiritual life ; how he did not desert their feeble souls and fainting hearts, but sanctified them by his Spirit, guarded them through dangerous snares, kept them from

yielding to corruption, reclaimed their wandering steps, and conducted them to glory.

O happy fellowship of the saints in heaven! happy spirits of the just made perfect! ye minister in the courts above, and stand before the throne without spot or blemish. Our dearest companions on earth, and our most admired fellow-worshippers, have their mournful imperfections so long as they are in the body, and thus prove often a grief, rather than a rejoicing, to the saints; but perfection and love distinguish the fellowship of the heavenly Jerusalem. In that happy abode, no jarring interests are known, no conflicting passions, no discording opinions, no envyings, or bitterness, or prejudices, or weakness, or corruptions. The communion of saints is there in its highest perfection, and there is nothing to hurt in all that holy mount, nothing to destroy in that city of the saints. The glorious company of the redeemed are all assembled there as one family, under one blessed Head; they are acquainted with each other's history and happiness, and obtain new discoveries of those scenes of wonder, admiration, and joy, which are ever opening to their view.

Here,

Here, humble travellers to Zion, give the powers of your mind full permission to indulge in the joyful contemplation of the society and fellowship in heaven ; that thus you may believe its happiness far superior to any intercourse enjoyed on earth. Consider yourselves as already arrived amongst the innumerable company of angels, and the just made perfect ; as united with them in surveying the wide circuit of the works of God, in examining the worlds of nature, providence, and grace, and in tracing in each the glory, wisdom, power, and love, of the Lord God omnipotent. Or if your faith cannot rise to this noble elevation, this evidence of things not seen ; if every feeling and sensation reminds you that you are still on earth ; let your hope look forward to what shall be hereafter ; expect to mingle, ere long, with patriarchs, prophets, evangelists, and apostles ; with all the redeemed out of every kindred, language, and nation ; with all the faithful of whom you have read or heard, whom you have known or esteemed. In heaven you will learn the mystery and the mercy of that providence and grace, which led the people

of God by the right way to the possession of the heavenly inheritance: you will bear your part in the wondrous narrative of divine transactions on earth; will tell the doings of the Lord to you and yours; and will call on all the inhabitants above to magnify, with heavenly rapture, the matchless grace of your redeeming God.

How unavoidably have we been led to speak of the employments of heaven, while reminding you of its better society!

The praises of the saints on earth are feeble, and are interrupted by many cares, by the entanglements of business, by the influence of worldly temptations, or by the various trials of life. But the saints above have fully triumphed over these countless evils of mortality. In that holy city which our God has prepared, the glorified powers of the happy inhabitants are exerted without ceasing, in contemplating, adoring, and enjoying the Lord God Almighty, who sitteth on the throne: thus employed, they experience a blessedness far beyond all that we can comprehend, and are freed from whatever can cause anxiety, sorrow, or fear.

How far better, then, is it to depart, and
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be with Christ, than to remain in this present imperfect state, where so many enemies must be encountered, so many corruptions opposed, and so many afflictions endured.

III. Let us now proceed to consider how important it is for all those who expect heaven, to live every day under the lively impressions and prospects of the future and better world. Looking forward, through faith, to what is unseen and everlasting, is calculated, in real Christians, to promote their purity, their patience, and their peace of mind.

The first advantage is, increasing sanctification. The exalted hope to which they are begotten by the gospel, is that of being for ever with the Lord; and having this hope, they are commanded to purify themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. They are excited to holiness by the powerful consideration, that without it no man can see the Lord. They are taught the necessity of being made meet for inheriting with the saints in glory. They are earnest, therefore, in fervent supplication, that the very God of peace should sanctify them

them wholly, and should preserve them blameless to the coming and kingdom of Christ.

If, therefore, men and brethren, ye are sincerely seeking the heavenly country, you will be careful, not only to be entitled to it through an interest in the Redeemer's infinite merits, but you will be equally anxious to be prepared for its sublime employments; by being sanctified in body, soul, and spirit. The spotless purity of the divine nature; that immediate access to God, with which the glorified above are perpetually blessed; the spirituality of the heavenly worship, and perfection of the heavenly state, unite in testifying, that the impenitent and impure cannot inherit the kingdom of God. We must be born again, and become new creatures in Christ; we must be washed from our sins, and followers of God as dear children, before we can be admitted into the blessed mansions of our Father's house.

Under these impressions, those who fear God diligently, endeavour to grow in every spiritual grace; to have their love of sin subdued, and its pernicious habits mortified; to have the principles of holiness cherished

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in their souls, and the influence of those principles appearing in the regulation of their temper, language, and conduct; to walk in fellowship with their heavenly Father; to pass the time of their sojourning in the fear of the Lord; to dwell on the believing contemplations of redeeming love; to be looking for, and hastening to, the coming of the Lord.

Seek, then, to live under the powers of the world to come, to mortify the deeds of the body, to set your affections on things above, and to be spiritually minded, which is life and peace.

Again, the expectation of heaven promotes the Christian's patience and tranquillity of spirit: "Be patient, brethren," says the apostle James, "for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." This Christian patience has a reference to three important branches of religious deportment; namely, to the performance of commanded duty, to the expectation of promised blessings, and to the sustaining appointed trials with meekness and resignation. The lively hope of heaven will invigorate our exertions and progress in all these respects: I know, says the humble
Christian,

Christian, there are many important duties, which I have to perform to God, to mankind, and to myself: I feel difficulty, opposition, and the influence of much corruption, when endeavouring to yield a persevering compliance with those incumbent duties; but the hope of future glory animates me to patient continuance in well-doing; it is therefore my firm determination, through grace, that I shall live while on earth, to the glory of that God, with whom I hope to live hereafter, in everlasting felicity; and that I will work the works of God, while it is called to-day, for soon the season of rest cometh, when I shall cease from my labours, and when these works shall follow me; not as entitling me to an eternal weight of glory, far too great to be purchased by my poor services, but as the evidence that I was not barren nor unfruitful in the faith of Christ.

I know, says the Christian, that there are many promises of scripture, not fulfilled in my experience; many reviving assurances of deliverance and triumph, which have been my staff and support through this long pilgrimage; the accomplishment of which
seems

seems to be so much delayed, that sometimes I am tempted to suspect, that God's faithfulness has failed: But heaven is the land of promise; and there alone, all the ransomed of the Lord can fully testify, that of all the good which the Lord hath spoken, not one thing has failed. The vision is for an appointed time, and will not tarry; I will wait for it in faith and patience; and will be a follower of those who have arrived at their better home, and are now inheriting the promises.

I know, says the Christian, that I may have many trying afflictions to encounter, the nature and duration of which I cannot now foresee; but in patience let me possess my spirit, for though weeping may endure for a night, yet joy will come in that bright morning, which is to usher in an unclouded everlasting day; after I have suffered a while, he who now strengthens, stablishes, and comforts me, shall then lead me to fountains of living waters, and wipe all tears from mine eyes; nay, will proclaim, to my unspeakable joy, that my days of mourning are for ever ended.

Lastly, The believing expectation of heaven

ven promotes the Christian's triumph and joy, amidst the depressing events of life. Often are the children of God in heaviness through manifold tribulations ; though these are not joyous but grievous, yet when they abound, consolations also abound through Christ ; especially, when he gives his people to rejoice in hope of the glory to be revealed ; and when he graciously whispers to their heart, by his word and Spirit, Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom : This one blessed saying of the faithful and true Witness, may indeed support your fainting spirits, ye humble followers of the Redeemer, whatever trials may be allotted you in the world.

Are you dependent, and in most indigent circumstances ? Be of good cheer, there is bread enough in your Father's house, and there you shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more, for the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed you ; nay, on earth he is your shepherd, and therefore you shall not want all needful provision in your way to the heavenly rest.

Are you surrounded with powerful and malicious enemies, or involved in much perplexity ;

plexity; so that when you expect rest, behold increasing trouble, and when you look for the consolations of the morning-light, behold obscurity and terror? Yet be of good cheer, lift up your head with joy, for behold your redemption is drawing nigh; that unchanging Saviour, on whom your soul rests, will soon bring light out of darkness, will bid the day dawn, and will command all the intervening shadows to flee away.

Are you conscious of your own weakness in the spiritual life, and full of fears that you shall decline, as many professing Christians have done, and fall short of heaven at last? Is this your terror and your burden? Be of good cheer; the everlasting High Priest hath compassion on the weak; he knows that his people on earth are but a little flock, few in number, and feeble in themselves, surrounded with furious foes, and unable to withstand the attacks of earth and hell: but he assures you, that the Almighty Jehovah is your Father; that it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom; that you are kept by his mighty power through faith unto salvation; that your faith, though weak, shall not utterly fail;

fail ; that he gives his sheep eternal life, and none shall pluck them out of his hands.

Are you grieved in your minds, under the loss of dear departed Christian friends and companions? Weep not for them, they are completely released from sorrow and sin ; are enjoying better society, than that of guilty, sinful, dying mortals ; are clothed with robes of light and glory, and are singing the song of Moses and the Lamb, of salvation and victory : all their clouds are scattered, all their doubts are solved, and all their anxious cares removed ; or if they still feel one wish unfulfilled, it is, that you may ere long join their celestial society ; and that they may enjoy the transporting pleasure, of unfolding to you those wondrous scenes, which now enlarge and feast their enraptured minds.

Why, then, are you in bondage all your life-time? Why so unwilling to take possession of the crown and the kingdom? Both are in view : You have to pass through the valley and shadow of death ; the Lord will be your light, go boldly through those separating waters of Jordan, his everlasting arms shall sustain you ; go, encounter that
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king of terrors, that last enemy; thy God engages, thou shalt be more than conqueror; then shall be brought to pass that saying, Death is swallowed up in victory; now is come salvation, the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ, and the accuser of the brethren is for ever cast out.

Such are the blessed effects, which the promise and prospect of heaven should have upon believers; to encourage them in duty, to make them possess their souls in patience, to animate their progress in holiness, to support their mind under trials, and to fill them with peace in believing. See, therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, that ye be looking and longing for the glorious appearing of the great God our Saviour; and when he is testifying by his providence and word, "Behold, he cometh in the clouds," let your souls triumphantly re-echo, "Even so come, Lord Jesus; yea, amen, come quickly."

This brings me to direct you to the improvement of the important subject we have been attempting to illustrate.

The expectants of heaven, and travellers to that better country, have already been exhorted,

exhorted, mourners in Zion have been comforted, and the feeble-minded encouraged to press forward with persevering alacrity. It therefore only now remains, that I conclude this discourse with a plain address to self-deceiving, dying mortals, who are regarding only earthly things, and looking only at what is seen and temporal.

Great is your danger, and awful your infatuation! You wish for safety and happiness, while eagerly pursuing only those delusive vanities which are passing away as the dews of the morning; you suffer earthly things to captivate the noblest affections of your immortal souls, when heaven itself is in your offer, and all the happiness of it to be obtained. O that the preacher could effectually awaken you from your fatal security, by plainly informing you what happiness you will lose, and what wretchedness you must endure, if you are not amongst the number of those who are earnest in seeking that better and heavenly country! You must lose the uninterrupted enjoyment of God's immediate presence; the beatific vision of the adorable Saviour; the unalarmed station at his right hand, when he
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comes to judge the nations; the right of being acknowledged, acquitted, and openly honoured, by the righteous Judge of all; of being presented to the Father with exceeding great joy; and of being crowned with immortal glory.

Nor will this privation or loss be the only circumstance which shall mark the wretchedness of the careless and ungodly, in the future state of existence. Actual and unutterable sufferings shall be their direful allotment; the vials of divine wrath shall be poured upon them without mitigation; and they shall hear that irresistible and terrible sentence, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting burnings.”

As their transgressions and impenitence have merited this condemnation from a righteous, long-suffering, holy God, so no stratagems of theirs can evade his awful vengeance. While on earth, the wicked speak peace to themselves, and remain unconcerned about future punishment; or if at times their slumbering conscience becomes at all awakened or alarmed by the preaching of the word, or by the voice of Providence, they take refuge from their fears in business, amusement,

amusement, or intemperance, or company ; they try to discredit those gloomy truths which speak of the tribulation and anguish threatened against such as obey not the gospel ; they give credit to the devil, when he insinuates to them, as he did to Eve, “ You shall not surely die.” They resist their galling convictions, and regard not the voice of the Almighty, whether he speaks to them by mercy or judgment, by his word or his ordinances.

But, when his time to punish shall arrive, they must listen and feel ; then they shall experience the certainty of that future woe, at which they so often madly sported, and of that condemnation which they so wantonly called down on themselves and their friends.

There is one consideration which undoubtedly will much increase their future misery, the agonizing remembrance, that once there was hope concerning them ; that a full salvation was in their offer, the way of life set before them, and the heavenly prize held forth for their acceptance. While they were on earth, the compassionate Redeemer earnestly intreated them to come to him, and lay hold on his covenant ; his faithful ser-
vants

vants beseeched them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God, to have compassion on their own souls, to consider their latter end, to flee from wrath, and to seek redemption through the blood of Jesus.

But careless, giddy, and unbelieving, they rejected all these exhortations, despised the rich offers of mercy and grace, rejected the pure commandments of scripture as unreasonably severe, and obstinately refused to receive the Saviour, to walk in his ways, or to choose the things well-pleasing in his sight.

How bitter must be the future upbraidings of their own accusing mind ! Methinks I hear them say, Had we exerted half the diligence to gain the kingdom of heaven, which we employed in fitting ourselves for the mansions of woe ; had we submitted to half the anxiety, labour, or fatigue, in working out our salvation, which we employed in preparing for a lot amongst the damned ; we never would have come into this place of torment !

But, alas ! while we would do nothing for heaven and eternal happiness, we subjected ourselves to care, to toils, to cost, and

to disquiet, for the poor, poor pleasure of walking in the broad path which leads to destruction. Far better would it have been for us, if, in the days of our merciful visitation, we had laid to heart the things which belong to our peace ; if we had chosen that good part which can never be taken away ; and if we had counted all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, to win him, and be found in him ; then would we have escaped this blackness of darkness, this indignation and wrath, this tribulation and anguish !

Men and brethren ! these things may appear to you hard and harsh sayings, so that you cannot patiently bear them, and cannot but dislike the men who prophesy such evil tidings. Yet, if these warnings are consistent with scripture, it would be cruelty to conceal them from your view, and it would be perfidy to disguise them.

May you, before it is too late, lay to heart the terrors of the Lord, and be effectually awakened from your fatal slumbers, and earnestly inquire what you shall do to be saved ! Then will you learn, to your unspeakable peace, that there is salvation in

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none but Jesus ; that he freely invites who-soever will to come to him, and most graciously promises to all who comply with his endearing invitation, eternal life, and every thing connected with eternal life, or preparatory for it.

May the God of all grace accompany, with his powerful blessing, our meditations on this portion of the sacred volume ; and to his most glorious name shall be ascribed the unrivalled and eternal praise. Amen and amen.

SERMON XIV.

THE EVERLASTING COVENANT.

2 SAM. xxiii. 5.

Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.

FEW persons are so successful in life, as to have every thing happening to them according to their wishes. Nor would it be of advantage to the real Christian, to feel that his worldly circumstances continued to flow with that tide of prosperity through life, which, in his early years, he fondly expected and desired. In youth, we call the world a paradise, and expect to enjoy in it
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whatever our hearts conceive to be worthy of coveting ; in more advanced age, we term it a wilderness, and look only for a succession of changes and trials for the remainder of the journey. For though God dearly loves his children, and graciously imparts to them numerous consolations, far more valuable than what any secular prosperity can yield, yet he no where promises them unmingled and uninterrupted happiness in the pilgrimage of life. Nay, he daily reminds them, by his word and providence, that this is a valley of tears ; that through tribulation they must enter the kingdom ; and that, when they have suffered a while, they shall be perfected. Among the variety of their trials, spiritual declensions and domestic griefs are peculiarly severe and distressing. When personal religion seems not to grow ; when their devotion is languid, their hopes clouded, their faith weak, their love cold, their prayers restrained, and their graces obscured ; then they feel sorrow which the world knows not of, and experience a bitterness of soul, far more agonizing than language can express. If, at the same time, temporal calamities abound ; if
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their house be not so with God, as they hoped it should have been ; if, while under spiritual pressures, they are also harassed with outward difficulties, with family-bereavements and inquietudes ; then indeed their tears flow, and their hearts faint.

But, amidst these multiplied miseries, they are not left without consolation ; a faithful God, who cannot change, is still their sure and all-sufficient help. Though, in a little wrath, he hides his face for a season, yet with everlasting loving-kindness he will have mercy upon them ; for great is his faithfulness, and he is ever mindful of his covenant.

To this train of sentiments we are naturally directed, by the reviving triumph in the text, which is a part of the last words of David, the son of Jesse, and spoken, as he tells us, (ver. 2.), under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They are descriptive, at the same time, of his faith in that glorious Messiah, whose precious grace is compared (ver. 4.) to the enlivening influence of the sun, and to refreshing showers of rain.

To this long-promised Saviour, David
looks

looks forward with eager desire and warmest delight. While revolving the past, and anticipating the future, he rejoices in the fulness of grace secured for him by inviolable engagements; and amidst his most painful recollections of his former afflictions, and the causes of them, he testifies his humble dependence on the great salvation, as all his comfort.

In the history of David, recorded in this second book of Samuel, there is something singularly tender and interesting in the expression, "Although my house be not so with God." Amidst the vast variety of uncommon and unexpected trials, with which this illustrious man was visited, arising from the cruelty of Saul, the persecution of his inveterate enemies, the treachery of his friends, the haughtiness of his companions, frequent exclusions from the sanctuary, and many dreary wanderings in the desert; amid all these trials, none were half so afflicting as his domestic miseries after his great transgression. From that mournful period to the concluding years of his life, he witnessed, among his own household, scenes of distress, criminality, and bloodshed, sufficient
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to overwhelm the spirit of the most hardy and unfeeling. How agonizing, then, must they have proved to so refined and pious a mind ! especially as each new trial brought along with it the recollection of his guilt, and convinced him that, though restored to favour, he must expect chastisement ; that though God pardoned his iniquity, he would take vengeance on his inventions.

These numerous and just chastisements produced their proper effect upon David. They humbled his spirit for his misconduct, filled him with sorrow for his sin, stripped him of all confidence in himself, increased his believing attachment to the promised Redeemer, and brought him back to that fervour of devotion, that fortitude of zeal for God, that unwearied activity in promoting the interests of religion, which had distinguished his former happier days. Thus, being recovered from his spiritual declensions, he, in the concluding years of his life, became more eminent, and zealous, and useful, than ever. Like the sun emerging from an evening cloud, he shone with uncommon splendour, and closed his eyes, as a man of God, in serenity and joy.

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This blessed serenity, and elevation of joy, in the near prospect of dissolution, arose neither from his high rank, nor external grandeur, nor from his superior attainments in piety, and the remembrance of his distinguished services in the cause of religion. Of these he makes no mention, in the text, as the foundation of his hope and happiness. But it was his knowledge of the great salvation, his dependence on the everlasting covenant, his firm persuasion of the divine faithfulness, that filled him with peace unspeakable, and enabled him to finish his course with triumph: "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure."

Without farther observation, I shall endeavour to state to you, I. Who are the happy persons, with whom God has entered into covenant: II. What is the nature of that covenant, which he makes with all his chosen: and, III. How well calculated this covenant is, to impart satisfying support to the mind, in all the bitterness of adversity, in all the consciousness of guilt,
and

and in all the prospects connected with eternity.

I. Let us attend, in a few words, to the character of those who are in covenant with God. Here it will be necessary to call your attention to the solemn transaction, which took place between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the counsels of peace, before time began; for with that transaction the covenant of mercy, mentioned in my text, is essentially connected.

The omniscient Jehovah, to whom all things are manifest from everlasting, having foreseen the violation of that law, which he would give to Adam, as the federal head of the whole human race; having viewed mankind, as lying under the condemnation, defilement, and ruin of the fall; having commiserated their wretched and helpless condition; he, in the richness of his love, resolved on their recovery. To accomplish this recovery, in a way consistent with the glory of his perfections, and the honour of his government, he constituted his only begotten Son, the one Mediator between an offended God and offending creatures; that,

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in this character, he might assume the nature of men, die for their sins, rise for their justification, and ascend to heaven, as their Representative and Intercessor. That this mediatory work might not be undertaken in vain, the Almighty Father promised to Jesus, that he should have a seed to serve him, while sun and moon endure; that, through the influences of the Spirit, many should come to him out of every kindred, nation, and language; that they should be given to him, as his peculiar people, over whom he would reign, ordering all the events of time for their benefit; upon whom he would confer both grace and glory, and by all of whom he would be supremely loved, honoured, worshipped, and obeyed.

In all these respects, the covenant of peace was made with Christ in behalf of all the elect, who were given to him from everlasting, to be by him redeemed, renewed, sanctified, and conducted to glory. In this sense, the text holds true of all the heirs of heaven, considered as one chosen and collected body. God may be said to have made this covenant with them, when he made it with Christ Jesus in their name,

name, and as their head and representative.

But the text evidently relates to that solemn personal transaction, which takes place between God and believers, at that remarkable period of their lives, when they are brought to know the things which belong to their everlasting peace, and are made partakers of the faith of God's chosen. It may therefore be proper, on this part of the subject, to give you a short description of the persons, who have laid hold of God's covenant, and who, on that account, may claim the confidence of the declaration made by David in the text. They are distinguished from others, by the sincerity of their repentance; the evangelical nature of their faith; and the perseverance of their love to the Saviour. By these three distinguishing marks, you may discern their character, and trace the progress of religion in their souls.

The *first* is the sincerity of their repentance. If God has made with you an everlasting covenant, you have been led to bewail the power and prevalence of your sins and corruptions; not those only which are manifest and hateful to others, but those also
which

which lie concealed within the heart, your secret idols, your unholy tempers, your irregular affections, and, in a particular manner, your unbelief, ingratitude, carnality, and pride. It grieves you to think, how often you have dishonoured God, rejected the Saviour, walked according to the course of this world, and fulfilled the evil desires of the mind and the flesh. Though you perceive not the multitude of your transgressions, though your convictions may be different from those of others, though you may wonder that you are so little affected and alarmed, yet, if God has made with you an everlasting covenant, you have obtained, through grace, such discoveries of sin and deserved wrath, as have led you to plead in earnest, " Save, Lord, or we perish; pardon our iniquities, for they are very great; heal our souls, for we have sinned against thee."

This repentance for sin, is essentially connected with faith in the Saviour; which is the *second* mark that distinguishes those with whom God has made an everlasting covenant. But let it ever be remembered, that this faith is far more than a rational approbation

bation of the Christian system, or a cold assent to the general truths of religion. It is a divine principle, implanted in the soul by the Holy Spirit, leading us to embrace the Redeemer in all his glorious offices as Mediator between God and man. It enables us to perceive his perfect suitableness to our circumstances ; and it encourages us to rely on him for complete salvation ; for strength to obey, as well as righteousness to justify ; for holiness, as well as comfort ; for victory over corruption, as well as deliverance from condemnation ; for peace with God, as well as remission of sin. Though such a faith may not always rise to the joyful persuasion of our own personal interest in Jesus, though discouraging doubts may greatly prevail, and though the soul may often mourn in secret over the sad remains of unbelief, yet it will be still found, in the experience of those who possess true faith in Christ, that they have renounced all confidence in the flesh ; that they look to him as the only refuge, and attempt to lay hold on his promises, though with a trembling hand ; being convinced that there is salvation in no other, and that he alone has the words of eternal life.

Third,

Third, The fruit of this faith in such as are in covenant with God, is their love to the Saviour, on whom they depend. This love they evince by warm gratitude for his unmerited grace ; by humble acknowledgements of their obligations to glorify his name ; by sincere delight in his ordinances ; by subjection to his authority, surrender of their lot to his disposal, and dedication of their persons to his praise.

From these few remarks, you may infer, who are the persons interested in the covenant of God's peculiar love, and how they are brought into this honourable relation. They have felt the insufficiency of all created comforts, to satisfy the desires of the immortal soul, or to support the mind in the view of eternity. They have said to riches, honour, and fame, It is not in you to give peace with God, or triumph over the fears of death. They have been roused from their former listlessness respecting heavenly objects, and have been taught to inquire, with sacred solicitude, What shall we do to be saved ? They see themselves sinners in the sight of God, and acknowledge before him, that however innocent and respectable they

they may be in the estimation of the world, yet, when weighed in the balance, they are found wanting. They acknowledge that they have been slaves to divers passions, strangers to vital religion, despisers of what is spiritual and divine. They know that sin is the ruin of the soul, and the accursed thing which God hates; that they deserve to perish, and can plead nothing but guilty at the bar of Heaven. With wonder they hear of the Saviour, who for them died, and offered himself a sacrifice well pleasing to God; with believing gratitude, they welcome the invitation to look unto him, and be saved; to come to him, and find rest for their souls. They behold in this Redeemer a transcendent beauty, which captivates their minds; and they take comfort from the persuasion, that in him is treasured up an inexhaustible fulness for the supply of all their wants. Therefore they trust in him alone for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Their hearts are opened to receive this Beloved of the Father, and their wills are subjected to his government and dominion. They consider him as their Prophet, to instruct; their
High-priest,

High-priest, to recover ; their King, to govern ; their example, to imitate ; their Advocate, to intercede ; and their complete Mediator, to render all their services acceptable to God. While thus receiving him as freely offered in the gospel, in solemn acts of self-dedication, they yield themselves to be guided by his word, to be sanctified by his Spirit, to be satisfied with his dealings, and devoted to his service. They renounce this transitory and unsatisfying world as their inheritance, and say unto God, “ Thou art the strength of our hearts, and our portion for ever.” They resist the insinuations of their unhallowed desires, and say unto Jesus, “ What have we any more to do with idols ? Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.” They dread dependence on their own resolutions and exertions, and rely on the aid of the Holy Spirit, to keep them by his almighty power, through faith unto salvation.

But no language can describe their grateful emotions, when, being strengthened by faith, they can say with the apostle, “ We know in whom we have believed, and are persuaded that he will keep what we have

committed to his care. Now they who sowed in tears, reap in joy ; and they who, under painful impressions of their utter unworthiness, went forth weeping, bearing precious seed, return rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.

SERMON

SERMON XV.

THE EVERLASTING COVENANT.

2 SAM. xxiii. 5.

Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.

HAVING, in the last discourse, attended to the character of those with whom God has entered into covenant, we now proceed,

II. To consider the nature of that gracious covenant which God makes with his people.

The word *Covenant* signifies, in scripture, sometimes a mutual agreement between two persons on a level, or nearly equal with each

other, to bestow certain favours, on the performance of certain stipulated conditions. Such was the covenant between David and Jonathan, Jacob and Abimelech, Abraham and the neighbouring princes. But this term is more frequently employed in scripture, to denote God's gracious intention and promise of conferring blessings and privileges, freely and without merit, on those whom he is pleased to honour. Such was his covenant with Noah, that the waters of the deluge should not again destroy the earth; such was his covenant with Israel, to make them his, and to be their God; and such was that blessed covenant of grace, of which we are now to speak. This last is styled by our blessed Lord, the New Covenant, or the New Testament in his blood; and by the apostle, a covenant of promise, because its promised blessings are bequeathed in a testamentary form, as sure legacies to all believers.

The inquiry, therefore, which here presents itself to our attention, respects the blessings which a faithful God secures to his people in the unalterable form of a covenant, ratified

ratified by an oath, and sealed with the blood of Christ.

That you may enter into the spirit of this inquiry, think with yourselves, what are the circumstances in which sinners are involved, before they are made partakers of the grace and mercy of God. They are under sentence of condemnation ; they are hastening to the grave, whence there is no return ; and they know, that after death come judgment and eternity.

1. They are sinners under sentence of condemnation. It is the sentence of that immutable law, which the honour of God's government obliges him to vindicate. It is the sentence of that infinite justice, which cannot permit the exercise of divine mercy to the guilty, until full satisfaction is made for transgression. It is the sentence of that glorious Being, who is infinitely holy, and hates all iniquity ; who is omnipotent, and can cast both soul and body into hell. This sentence of condemnation, therefore, involves in it the most alarming consequences ; the anger of God, banishment from his presence, the dread of being treated by him as criminals who have forfeited all right to
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any favour, or as rebels who, though supported for a season, are reserved to the time of the execution of threatened vengeance. Such is our situation by nature; such are the effects of sin; and well may we exclaim, “Who can stand before his wrath? who can dwell with devouring burnings?”

But from this condemnation and danger, and from all these terrors, believers in Jesus are redeemed by that grace which brings salvation. For the first article in God’s well-ordered covenant of mercy, is the declaration, that he has forgiven all their iniquity, has turned away his anger, and has rescued their souls from destruction*.

But even remission of sins would not be sufficient to comfort the mind of the awakened, if a suspicion remained that the Almighty will treat them merely as pardoned criminals, without loving them, or shewing them any particular tokens of regard. To remove this suspicion, he, through the gospel of Jesus, connects the adoption of sons with the forgiveness of sin; and assures all who have fled for refuge to the Saviour, that they

* Heb. viii. 12. compared with Luke i. 72. 73. 77.

they are the children of God ; that he regards them as his children ; and that, though he may chasten them for their follies, with a view to their profit, yet his loving-kindness he will not utterly take from them, nor suffer the covenant of his peace to be removed : “ For I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons, saith the Lord Almighty.”

Still, may not death, which dissolves all human connections, put a period to this near relation with our God ? The same inspired volume which teaches us, with certainty, that the soul is immortal, also assures believers, that when time shall be no more, they shall continue in blessed union, friendship, and fellowship, with the everlasting Jehovah ; that though they walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he will be with them, and will comfort them ; that, though their hearts and flesh fail, he will be the strength of their heart, and their portion ; that he is their Sun and Shield, will give grace and glory, and will be their God for evermore.

By these faithful promises, the wretchedness of their natural state is wholly taken away.

away. Instead of feeling the awful terror of divine wrath, they are called to expect the joyful smiles of God's reconciled countenance. Instead of dreading the approaches of the last enemy, they know that death shall be swallowed up in victory. Instead of living in the fears of the blackness of darkness, they are begotten to the lively hopes of an inheritance eternal in the heavens, secured to them by the sure decree, the faithful promise, and the immutable covenant, of that unchanging God who has said, "I will never leave nor forsake you; ye shall never perish, but have everlasting life." But,

2. When adverting to the blessings secured to believers by the covenant of grace, it becomes us to notice those which relate to a change of character and attainment, as well as those which relate to a change of state and condition. Great as is the honour of adoption into the family of God, yet miserable must be the mind of his children, if they had no certainty of deliverance from the prevalence of corruption, and the power of their spiritual enemies. To them, the consequences of yielding to temptation are,
darkness,

darkness, desertion, and terror. Although, therefore, they are pardoned, justified, and accepted, yet, if left under the dominion of their lusts and passions, they would be more wretched than other men, in so much as their disobedience and perverseness, the results of these affections, would be more evident, more aggravated, and more galling, than in other men. Hence the object of real Christians is, the attainment of holiness in heart and life. With this view, they beseech the God of all grace to sanctify them wholly, to uphold their goings, and to preserve them blameless. In reply to such requests, he promises, that where sin abounded, he will make grace much more to abound; that he will shed abroad his love in their hearts; that his Spirit will work in them to will and to do of his good pleasure; and that he who has begun the good work in them will carry it on to the day of the Lord. Corruptions in the heart, like the Canaanites in the land of Judea, may be permitted to attack, harass, and wound, the Israel of God; but so far is this from finally prevailing, that they shall be driven out by little and little, until the feeble, wounded, imperfect Christian,

tian, is made more than conqueror, through the power and faithfulness of the great Captain of salvation. In proof of this, you may remark, that in the account given, by the prophet Ezekiel, of God's gracious covenant with his people, its principal promise relates to the nature, certainty, and progress, of their sanctification. Thus you read, " I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from
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all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God *.”

These are indeed great and precious promises! No wonder that the heart of the humble believer melts within him, and is overwhelmed, to think of the unsearchable riches of grace, in making so full provision for the sanctification and comfort of miserable men, who were naturally sold under sin, and slaves to divers lusts and passions. The unrenewed soul, with its affections and faculties, is here described, as “hard and stony;” strongly expressive of its insensibility by nature, its propensity to stubbornness, its aversion to be improved, and its utter unfruitfulness, as the flinty rock, though enjoying

* Ezek. xxxvi. 21.—28.

joying the beams of the sun, and watered by the rain from heaven. Yet, in the covenant of God, it is promised, that these obdurate hearts shall be renewed and sanctified, cleansed from all their pollutions, instructed in the statutes of the Lord, and enabled to persevere in the ways of his commandments. Nay, farther, the promise is, that he himself will perform this arduous work, by the exertions of his own omnipotent grace; that he, who requires his people's obedience, will incline them to obey; that he, who gives the precept, will furnish strength for their obedience of it, and that his enlightening, sanctifying Spirit will abide with them, to teach, encourage, and uphold them in his righteous ways.

5. In examining the believer's charter of privileges, we find one which has not yet been particularly noticed, though it is more frequently mentioned in scripture than any other promise of the well-ordered covenant: "I will be your God," says Jehovah. This comprehends every thing, and infinitely surpasses what any poor dependent creature could have expected. Had not the Sovereign Ruler of the universe declared it to be
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the privilege of his people, it would have been arrogance in any to lay claim to so high an honour. But seeing he, who cannot lie, has said, "I will be your God," let us not stagger at the promise through unbelief, but be strong in faith, giving glory to his name. This saying implies far more than reconciliation and protection, though these are blessings peculiarly gratifying, to the heart of the awakened sinner. It implies peculiar intimacy, and perpetual connection with the Lord God omnipotent; the guidance of his word; the guardianship of his power; and the enjoyment of his immediate presence through everlasting ages. "Be not afraid," says he to all his people, "I am thy God, and thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward: I will strengthen and uphold thee, will guide thee by my counsel, and will afterwards conduct thee to my glory."

In retiring from the pleasing survey of these spiritual blessings, well may we exclaim, Happy are the people who are destined to inherit them! blessed beyond the power of utterance are they, whose God is the Lord; that Lord who rules on high, and makes every thing work together for their
eternal

eternal good! The men of this world may call this happiness in question, and may thus argue: Are not the godly more miserable than others? confined to their duties, when others are enjoying the gaieties of life,—borne down with adversity, when others are abounding in comforts,—exhausted with distress, when others are strong and active,—hastening to the grave, when others are flourishing in their old age. Where, then, can be the happiness attending religion, if such is the lot of the saints? The persons who adopt such language do greatly err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of grace on the heart. Let them not talk of the Christian being confined by the duties of religion. These are his joy and his desire; the green pastures where his soul is nourished in this barren land. Nor let them talk of his being miserable under trials. Though many are his afflictions, yet he knows that these are necessary proofs of love. He experiences pleasures which the world cannot impart. His faithful Saviour leaves him not alone, but comforts him with his presence; while hopes of glory sweeten all his ills, and brighten his prospects in the darkest

darkest hours. That feebleness of frame, and those approaches of dissolution, which to the unrighteous appear so formidable, are to him the messengers of peace, sent to testify that his warfare is almost over, and that his full redemption draws nigh.

Having given you a general enumeration of the important blessings which God has promised to his people, in his covenant of grace and love, it only remains that I direct your attention,

III. To the distinguishing properties of this covenant. It is everlasting, it is sure, it is well ordered.

The word *everlasting* leads us to reflect on the counsels of peace from eternity, and carries forward our views to the unmingled, uninterrupted, and endless joys, which are reserved for the righteous. The term *sure* intimates to us, that our hopes and security of happiness rest on a solid and permanent foundation. Did our acceptance with God depend on our fluctuating frames, our feeble vows, our imperfect services, or any thing connected with us, it could not be sure. But, thanks to God, it depends on the perfection

fection of the Redeemer's sacrifice, the efficacy of his mediation, and the veracity of his promises. To Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, is committed the sovereign administration of providence and of grace. With him are intrusted all the present and future interests of his people; and by him are imparted all spiritual blessings, according to his own unerring wisdom and infinite love. These are the important truths which render the covenant sure. It is because the promises are in Christ, that they are "yea and amen," ratified and confirmed. It is because he lives, that his people shall live also. It is because they are his, and he is God's, that of all whom the Father has given him, he will lose none, but will raise them up at the last day.

The covenant which God makes with his children is well ordered, because its various blessings are communicated by him in the season and manner most proper for promoting their best interests, and for displaying the divine glory. In illustration of this, let the two following instances be sufficient; namely, the ordering of the gradual progress
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of their graces, and the wisdom of God in the variety of their trials.

1. Those who have attended to the experience of the people of God, must have remarked, that there is a wonderful diversity in their improvement in grace. Though led by the same Spirit, partaking of the same renewed nature, united to the same Saviour, and travelling to the same heavenly country; yet they differ widely from each other in their habits, tempers, and pursuits. They are converted at different seasons; they are awakened by different means; their convictions are not equally strong; and there is a great variety in the whole progress of their spiritual life. Some advance with calmness and uniformity to the end of their journey, and others run well only for a time. Some, like Peter, are speedily restored, and others go halting all their lives in bitterness of soul. Some, like the sun, shine brighter and brighter to the perfect day; and others, after a period of darkness, finish their course in unclouded splendour.

All this is well ordered, and for many wise and important purposes. By this variety of dispensations, Christians are taught

not to limit the Holy One of Israel in his operations, nor judge of others by themselves ; to bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfil the law of Christ ; to edify and comfort the feeble-minded ; to depend more entirely on the Saviour's fulness ; to be less vain of their own attainments ; to watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation ; and to fear, lest a promise being given, they should seem to come short of it.

2. Their trials are well ordered, and wisely timed. Though the covenant which God makes with his people is a transaction of incomprehensible love ; though it raises believers to the highest honours, and uniformly consults their real happiness ; yet it nowhere teaches them to expect exemption from trouble and sorrow. But, blessed be God, it promises them support under all their difficulties and distresses, and declares, that these shall not be more severe, nor longer continued, than what unerring wisdom and unbounded goodness have determined to be necessary and beneficial. If they are in heaviness, it is not without reason ; if they are afflicted, it is in faithfulness. The faith of Abraham, and the meekness of
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of Moses, must be peculiarly tried, to shew them the imperfection of the very graces in which they respectively excelled. David's mountain of prosperity must not always stand strong, lest he should imagine that it cannot be moved; and even Paul must have a thorn in the flesh, lest, by the abundance of his revelations, he be exalted above measure. Nay, every Christian has his trial, and every trial has its peculiar language. All are numbered, all are arranged, all are necessary.

Perhaps, brethren, your circumstances are not what they have been in former times; the world frowns on you; your friends forsake you; your enemies triumph over you; your business fails; your kindred and companions are taken away; Joseph is not, Simeon is not, Benjamin also is demanded; and your habitation of joy is now become Allon-bacuth, a place of weeping. Yet deem not yourselves friendless or deserted. Die who will, your God lives for ever, and is the rock of your salvation. The rod is in a Father's hand; and when he afflicts you, it is in love. By the trials which you experience, he is raising you above all depend-

ence on the enjoyments of the world, and making you seek and find your highest happiness in fellowship with God. He is moderating your attachment to the relations of life, and increasing your desires for heaven, where the days of your mourning shall be ended.

Perhaps a feeble frame of body often detains you from the sanctuary of God, and diminishes the ardour of your devotion in secret worship, and in solemn ordinances. Believe it, Christians, this is not inconsistent with the love of God to your souls. You escape many snares and many evils by this weakness of body. God is less forgotten, the world less esteemed, futurity less neglected, than if you had been favoured with constant health and a vigorous constitution.

Are you in bondage through the fear of death? or are you kept in daily terror of the grave? You are living far below your privileges; for if you have fled for refuge to the Saviour, and have laid hold on God's covenant, then death is yours,—your release from warfare, your deliverance from woe, your ministering angel, to conduct your ransomed spirit to glory. Every
circumstance

circumstance connected with that decisive event, the time, the place, and the manner, are well ordered, and shall work together for your good. If you are heirs of the covenant, fear not the separation of the soul from the body. Think what it is for a Christian to die. It is to escape from this prison-house of clay ; to emerge from the swelling streams of Jordan ; to leave all corruption behind ; to be clothed with immortality ; to behold the face of God in righteousness ; to see Jesus in the full splendour of his glory ; to be supported by his everlasting arms ; to share his victories ; and to participate in that celestial, unceasing, and transporting triumph, “ Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ : for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony ; and they loved not their lives unto the death*.” If this be death, what

* Rev. xii. 10. 11.

what Christian, depending on the Captain of his salvation, should fear to die?

Thus, in all respects, the everlasting covenant is well ordered; and hence learn, genuine disciple of Jesus! to enlarge your expectations. Every blessing which the exigencies of your nature demand, every grace which you feel to be necessary, is graciously promised. Let your calamities be ever so numerous, and your sufferings ever so complicated; yet, in your lowest abasement, and in your worst frame, you may lay hold on this covenant, and derive consolation from its arrangements of mercy. It engages, and makes good to the saints in every age, that when they are weary and heavy laden, the Saviour will give rest to their souls; when in bondage, that he will proclaim liberty; when grieved in their minds, that he will speak peace; when weak in themselves, that he will make them strong in the Lord; when tempted, that they will find a way to escape; and when conflicting with the last enemy, that he will give them to rejoice in hope of the glory to be revealed.

Let it then be the daily endeavour and joy of us all, to embrace the Saviour in all
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his offices as Mediator ; to plead the accomplishment of his promises ; and to derive consolation in all situations, from the firm persuasion, that the everlasting Father is gracious to all who fear him, and that, “ though our house be not so with God, yet he has made with us an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XVI.

THE STRONG CONSOLATION.

HEB. vi. 18.

That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.

As this epistle was originally addressed to Jewish converts, its declarations chiefly refer to the institutions of Moses, and are intended to shew the vast superiority of the gospel-dispensation, above that which was now to pass away.

Thus the language of our text evidently refers to the appointment of the cities of refuge in the land of Judea. Of these cities you have a plain account in the book of
Numbers.

Numbers *. They were appointed by divine mercy, for the benefit of the manslayer; their gates were open both by day and night; they who fled to any one of those cities, though keenly pursued by the avenger of blood, were safe as soon as they entered within its walls; and they abode there until the death of the high-priest, and enjoyed all the benefits of citizens.

All this typified the glorious refuge provided for the guilty, through that Saviour of whom it is said, "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation. Therefore turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope; and he will send forth the prisoners out of the pit wherein there is no water †."

To those who had been born under the Jewish dispensation, and had been, through grace, made followers of Christ, the language of the text must have sounded as sweetest melody, and must have appeared unspeakably precious; for they could easily trace the resemblance between the cities of refuge and the great Redeemer of sinners;
between

* Numb. xxxv. 25.

† Zech. ix. 9—12.

between the manslayer, who fled to these cities, and awakened sinners, who seek redemption through the blood of Jesus; between the protection of those who had got admission into those chosen cities, and the far greater safety of all who are in Christ. The one had refuge, the other enjoyed strong consolation; the one was secured in every needful privilege by the law of Moses, the other was made an heir of the noblest blessings by the oath of God.

In discoursing on this rich and comprehensive portion of scripture, it is proposed, through divine aid, to illustrate the following particulars: **I.** To shew what is the hope set before us, and who they are who have fled for refuge to that hope: **II.** To shew what are the strong consolations provided for the righteous, and which are rendered certain and immutable by the promise and the oath of an unchangeable God: **III.** To direct you to the practical improvement of this subject, by addressing various characters of professing Christians.

I. Do you seriously inquire, what is the
hope

hope set before you? The answer is, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and his great salvation. Hence the apostle Paul calls Christ our hope, that is, the foundation and support, the author and object, of the hope of all who believe in his name; or, as the same apostle elsewhere expresses it, Christ in you the hope of glory: that is, your title to future happiness, your fitness for it, your perseverance in the way, and your happy possession of it in the end, are all derived from him alone, from his mediation and intercession, his covenant and promise, his merits and grace.

This hope through Jesus, this prospect of eternal life, is set before us in the gospel.

In the work of creation, mankind may read the wisdom and the power of God. In the course of providence, they may read his patience and sovereignty, by his dealings both with nations and families; and by the lightnings and thunders of Sinai, they may learn the danger of transgression. But it is only by the pure light of the gospel, that Christ Jesus is made known as the Lamb of God,

God, who taketh away the sins of the world ; as the way, the truth, and the life, without whom none can come to the Father.

Here he is set before us, not to amuse us with vain speculation ; not to be the scorn of the profane ; not to produce unavailing controversies ; but to be contemplated with admiring attention, to engage our eager pursuit, and to captivate our supreme desire, as worthy of all acceptation.

Christ Jesus, then, is the hope set before us ; he is clearly revealed in the gospel as the refuge of the afflicted, the rest of the weary, the place of retreat, of shelter, and of continued abode. In him we may find safety from every danger ; abundant supply for every want ; victorious grace to subdue our corruptions ; unerring wisdom to guide our steps ; almighty aid to strengthen our hearts ; and never-failing love to soothe our troubled minds, and to comfort us through the weary pilgrimage of life.

This brings us to what is chiefly intended under this head of discourse, viz. the illustration of the character of those who have fled

fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel.

1. This implies an abiding sense of danger, and earnest desires after deliverance.

Mankind, though captives to sin and Satan, yet too often live at ease in an unrenewed state ; like persons deprived of reason, they sport in their fetters, and imagine themselves the monarchs of the world ; but when, through sovereign grace, they are restored to a right mind, and become acquainted with their real character, they feel their misery, and can no longer, as formerly, live in a state of ease and security. They perceive that they are indeed captives under a foreign yoke, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise ; that they have lost communion with God, and are under his wrath and curse ; that they cannot redeem their own souls, and are every hour hastening on to death, to judgment, and to everlasting misery ; that their hearts, instead of being right with God, are deceitful and wicked, their wills perverse, their mind darkened through ignorance, their affections sensual, their desires earthly, and their whole nature depraved.

depraved. Having thus acquired the knowledge of themselves, they sincerely lament their bondage to those fleshly lusts which war against the soul ; and they eagerly long for deliverance from the wretched state in which they are involved : Give us a way to escape, O God ! from the guilt of sin, from the condemnation of a broken law, and from the galling chains of ignorance and unbelief. What shall we do to be saved ? Grant us pardon, acceptance, and complete redemption.

Happy they who have got thus far in religion, who are weary of Satan's service, and are longing to learn how they may escape from the dominion of pride and passion, of intemperance and impurity, of sinful pleasures and worldly maxims. Such persons resemble the manslayer hastening to the city of refuge ; they are sensible of their danger ; they see the avenger of blood pursuing them with rapid eagerness ; and they hear him saying, " Vengeance is mine, I will repay ;" therefore their chief solicitude is no longer, " What shall we eat, or drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed ?" but,
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how shall we escape the wrath which we have deserved ?

2. Flying for refuge to the hope set before us, implies our renouncing false confidence, and seeking salvation in Christ alone.

When Satan finds that he cannot keep his captives at ease in the state of alienation from God ; when, on the contrary, they become deeply concerned about their souls ; when they feel and own themselves sinners ; and when they seriously inquire, Where-withal can we come with acceptance before the Most High, and how shall fallen men be righteous in their Maker's sight ? he uses many stratagems to keep them ignorant of the redemption through Christ, and to turn away their attention from the only true method of recovery. The first of these is to make them become self-righteous, and to make them abstain from vicious indulgences. In this state of mind, they carefully keep themselves from every sin ; they pray, and read the scriptures, and attend upon the preaching of the word ; they worship with much seeming devotion, offer up vows to God, and do many things in themselves worthy of praise. But, alas ! on this external

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nal reformation they build their hopes of acceptance, speak peace to themselves, and secretly think that their service is complete. Meanwhile they are strangers to the love of Christ, to communion with God, to genuine humility of heart, to spiritual-mindedness, and to all the distinguishing marks of the children of God. They find afterwards, as the work of God advances, that they have taken a wrong course to their desired haven. All that they have done has given false hopes to their immortal souls. They have been building a superstructure without a foundation; and while seeking to establish a righteousness of their own, they have refused to submit to the righteousness of God. Still they are in quest of the right way to the city of refuge, and still they follow on to know the Lord; and they gradually obtain such views of themselves, and of divine things, as to banish all self-confidence, and lead them to seek rest where alone it can be found. They know that the law is spiritual, and reaches to the dispositions of the heart, to principles and motives, as well as to words and actions; they perceive the infinite evil of the sins of their heart, and of
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all opposition to the authority of God ; and are convinced, that however blameless they may be before the world, yet, if not renewed in the spirit of their mind, they are still far from the kingdom of heaven. Thus, from being self-righteous Pharisees, they often become for a season desponding mourners in Zion ; they feel many perplexing doubts about the Redeemer's willingness to save such sinners as they are. What right can they have to come to him as they are ? What worth or qualification can they plead ? How can they be included in the covenant of mercy made with believers ? How shall they obtain that true faith, without which they cannot be justified ? Still, however, they are convinced, that there can be no refuge for them but in Christ ; that if redeemed, it must be by his precious blood ; and if accepted, it must be in the Beloved.—This leads to remark,

3. That flying for refuge to the hope set before us, implies personal application to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our only Saviour ; and sincere reliance on what he has done and suffered, is all our plea before God. We come as weary and heavy-laden to him

who is set forth as the all-sufficient Propitiation ; and we commit the everlasting interests of our souls to that Beloved of the Father, who is our salvation and desire.

This application to the Lord Jesus Christ is the great essential step in flying for refuge to the hope set before us ; and until this step is taken, all the experiences mentioned under the two former particulars may come short of real conversion. Many have had convictions, alarms, and desires, while, after all these, they have gone away, and walked no more with Jesus. But, when the work of grace is real, we will look to him who was lifted up on the cross ; our language will be, “ Save, Lord, or we perish ;” we will count all but loss, that we may be found in him ; we will receive him for righteousness, for strength, for sanctification ; and we will give ourselves to the Lord in a covenant never to be forgotten. Brethren, if this be our experience, it may be said of us, that we have fled for refuge to the hope set before us in the gospel ; that we have turned as prisoners of hope to our stronghold ; that we have passed from death to life, and are no more strangers and foreigners,

ers, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of faith.

Hence this was the joyful message which the apostle carried to men of all nations: “Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this Saviour is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all who believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses:”

This is the message, men and brethren, which I bring to you, testifying and assuring you, that God is in Christ reconciling sinners to himself; that if a sense of sin has brought you to the Saviour, though your transgressions have been innumerable and highly aggravated; you shall in no wise be cast out; you shall be received graciously, and loved freely; and if you have fled to this hiding-place for deliverance from the guilt, the punishment, and the power of sin, your desire shall be granted; and where sin abounded, grace shall much more abound.

4. All who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel, do experience a remarkable and complete change in their views, sentiments, and pursuits;

they are made new creatures in Christ, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness. It is the language of scripture, that all men in a state of nature set their affections on the things of time and sense, are slaves to divers lusts, and walk according to the course of this evil world. But Jesus is a complete Saviour; whom he pardons and justifies, them he renews and sanctifies.

When they experience the sweetness of God's pardoning love, the riches of redeeming mercy, and the peace of soul which flows from believing, then sin is hated and dreaded; they pray against and resist it: then the prevailing language of the heart is not, Who will shew us earthly good? but, Lord, lift on us the light of thy countenance; this will put more joy into our heart, than when corn and wine do most abound. What have we any more to do with idols? Shall we sin because grace abounds? God forbid. How shall we, who are dead to sin by profession and obligation, live any longer therein! Let the time past suffice to have wrought the will of the flesh. We are not our own, we are bought with a price; therefore

fore we are bound to glorify God in soul, body, and spirit, which are his.

The followers of Christ well know the powerful influence of these principles, in purifying the heart through faith; in overcoming the world; in leading them so to love Christ, as to keep his commandments; and in rendering his service easy and honourable. Far, therefore, from your minds be the blasphemous thought, that the doctrines of faith, the gospel of Christ, salvation by grace, redemption through the blood of Jesus, and justification through his imputed righteousness, are doctrines hurtful to the best interests of morality and obedience. This is so far from being true, that if you know any thing of what the scripture reveals, you must know that it is faith which purifies the heart, by looking not at what is seen and temporal, but at what is unseen and everlasting. It is the gospel which refines the soul in all its powers; which raises the Christian above the grovelling appetites of a sensual mind; and which enforces, from the noblest motives, a ready compliance with the whole commandments of God. It is his grace bringing salvation, which,

which, in any age or community, has taught men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts ; and nothing less can lead believers, with the full consent of their will, the full conviction of their understanding, and with the habitual tenor of their lives, to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in a present evil world.

To conclude this part of the subject : What we have now said respecting the hope set before us in the gospel, has been with the intention of recommending the Lord Jesus Christ, and his great salvation, to your admiration and choice ; Jesus is well entitled to the throne of your heart, by the transcendent dignity of his divine nature. The blessings he imparts are of inestimable value ; and in the gospel, he offers himself, with the unsearchable riches of his purchase, to you, to all, and even to the chief of sinners.

Why, then, deprive yourselves of happiness when it is in your offer ? Why continue poor, blind, naked, wretched, and miserable, when gold tried in the fire, and the white raiment of perfect righteousness, are provided, revealed, and offered for your salvation ?

tion? Why harden your heart against that compassionate Redeemer, who stands and knocks, declaring his willingness to come in and dwell with you?

I address those stout-hearted, and far from righteousness, those who are careless sinners, together with those who have only a name to live: Why fight against the Lord and his anointed? Why counteract the merciful designs of his glorious gospel? Why live without God in the world?

Incline, therefore, your ear to the things which belong to your everlasting peace; come to the Saviour, and choose the things which please him; then may you, without presumption, adopt the evangelical triumph of the prophet, speaking in name of the church, “Lord, we will praise thee; for though thou wast angry with us, thine anger is turned away: Behold, God is our salvation; we will trust, and not be afraid*.”

Let me prevail with you, fellow-mortals, to follow the path pointed out in our text. Flee for refuge to the hope set before
you;

* Isa. xii. 1. 2.

you ; turn to your strong-hold, ye prisoners of hope : Great is your danger, if you continue longer in your present secure state ; the destroying angel pursues you with rapid step ; the avenger of sin is at hand ; the storms of divine wrath will sweep away every refuge of lies ; and there can be no salvation but in the Anointed of the Father.

How manifold, important, and encouraging, are the arguments which might be used for your complying with this exhortation !

I this day invite and earnestly beseech every individual to whom these words are addressed, to embrace the gracious Redeemer ! By all the infallible certainty of your being blessed through your union with him ; and by the equal certainty of your being punished with everlasting destruction, if ye will not have him to reign over you : By the bitter agonies he endured when he was wounded for your transgressions, and the benefits he procured when he offered himself a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour : By the unlimited offers of salvation

vation which he makes to sinners of mankind : By all these solemn considerations, I beseech you to lay hold on his covenant, and to give yourselves unto the Lord.

Amen, so be it, and to his blessed name shall be all the glory. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XVII.

THE STRONG CONSOLATION.

HEB. vi. 18.

That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.

MANY form unjust notions of vital religion. They suppose it a dull and melancholy thing. When they embrace its doctrines, they consider themselves as bidding adieu to every thing which deserves the name of pleasure; that they must be affected in their manners, singular in their opinions, and be devoted to a life of sorrow and mortification.

Such persons have assumed their mistaken notions of serious godliness, by listening to
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the vain conversation and ensnaring principles of worldly men. Those who mind earthly things as their chief good, and who look only at what is seen and temporal, do not hesitate to say, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Or, Can any pleasure arise from a life spent in the ways of holiness, and in communion with God?

All men wish for peace, and seek after happiness; but, alas! the greater part of the world are seeking safety in the broad way which leads to destruction, and attempt to secure their present happiness, in the pursuit of those things which end in bitterness and death. Such may be addressed in the language of the inspired apostle, "What fruit have you in those things of which you ought to be ashamed, the end whereof is death?" Satan is deceiving you as he deceived Eve, holding out the forbidden fruit, and saying, It is fair and good; but concealing from you that the sentence has gone forth, and that, "in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."

To guard us against such fatal delusions, our text gives us a very different view of genuine godliness, and declares, that it yields
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present comfort, and leads to future happiness: For, says the inspired apostle, and let his words be the rejoicing of your heart, he has “ confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

The hope of which the apostle speaks is Christ himself, in all his suitableness and fulness; he is the foundation, the author, and the object of the Christian’s hope.

This hope, though hid from ages and generations, is now set before us, and made manifest, not by the light of nature, by the powers of reason, or by the discoveries of philosophy; but by the glorious gospel of peace and reconciliation.

The persons who flee for refuge to this hope, are made sensible of their danger, and sincerely concerned for deliverance; they unfeignedly renounce their former false grounds of dependence, and most cordially rely on the Mediator for grace and glory.

These things we have already illustrated; and we now propose, through divine aid, to
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point out the well-grounded consolations provided for all the righteous in Christ.

Here we would be naturally led to speak of the variety and extent of the divine promises, and concerning their unalterable confirmation by what is here emphatically styled the oath of God, or his solemn appeal to his own infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, for the accomplishment of whatever he has promised.

But, as this embraces only one distinguished object of Christian privilege, and as there are other sources of strong consolation unfolded by the gospel, we wish to take a more extended survey of the privileges of God's chosen people, and to state to you what is the great goodness which a faithful and unchangeable God has provided for all the righteous, and what are the solid grounds upon which they may build the assured expectation of obtaining all this purchased and promised happiness.

In entering on this delightful subject, we resemble a person who is permitted to walk through the pleasure-grounds of some extensive estate; through gardens adorned with every flower which can please the eye,
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and every fruit which can gratify the taste. Let him also have unlimited permission, not merely to roam at large, to contemplate and admire, but to select such of those flowers and fruits as chiefly engage his attention and admiration. Where all is so beautiful and alluring, his difficulty is to make a selection.

Thus it is with the ministers of the gospel, when wishing to discourse on its consolations and blessings. But as a selection is necessary, we shall endeavour to direct the minds of the faithful in Christ to some of those fair, fragrant, and precious fruits, which grow upon the tree of life; some of those satisfying comforts provided for all who have laid down their weapons of rebellion, have fled to the Saviour, and have received him as their Prophet, Priest, and King.

1. By fleeing to the refuge and the hope set before us in the gospel, awakened penitents are freed from the alarming sense of guilt, and assured that God has turned away his anger, and restored them to all the benefits of his friendship and love.

Every

Every person who thinks seriously about his everlasting concerns, or about the holiness of God, and the spiritual demands of his immutable law, must feel at times alarming forebodings of future judgment, and must have reason to suspect that a just and jealous God will deal with him in anger; that he has done many things which he ought not, has come far short of the glory of God, and has much reason to fear, that when he is brought before the Judge of all, he will be covered with anguish and dismay.

Amidst those thoughts of personal unworthiness, the pleasures of the world cannot give relief to their uneasy minds; the false reasonings of self-deception cannot restore their souls to tranquillity and cheerfulness; the presumptuous reliance on divine mercy, independently of the Mediator, cannot say to trembling penitents, Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven.

But the gospel of salvation furnishes a suitable remedy for those complicated evils. It reveals mercy united with justice, exhibits an atoning sacrifice of infinite value, and proclaims remission of sin through the blood
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of the Lamb. Invitations of mercy are addressed to the most hopeless, and endearing assurances from the compassionate Redeemer are made to all who come to him.

This is the balm which heals the wounded conscience, and gives strong consolation, which the world can neither give nor take away. This tells the sinner, how God can be just, and yet the justifier of those who believe in Jesus; how he may be accepted in the Beloved; and how he may obtain the full forgiveness of his daily transgressions. What heavy burdens does the faith of this remove! what dark clouds does it dispel! and what unfeigned joy does it not impart! The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and such have far more gladness than the wicked in their corn and wine.

When the Spirit of God carries home those animating truths with power; when they who have seen their need of the glorious Physician, are looking to him as the stung Israelites looked to the brazen serpent; when they plead with sincerity and fervent earnestness, "Save, Lord, or we perish;" and when they rely for acceptance on his
perfect

perfect righteousness, as appointed in the room of the guilty ; then are they accepted in the Beloved, and to them belongs the comfort of these joyful tidings, “ Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more : I have received you graciously, and loved you freely ; and betrothed you to myself in truth and faithfulness, for ever and ever.”

May you, therefore, who have looked unto Jesus for salvation, take the comfort of his faithful declarations, and know that he has made with you an everlasting covenant, and that he has given you the sure mercies of David. Being justified through faith, may you have peace with God, and be adopted into his family : “ And if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.”

2. A source of strong consolation to all who are in Christ, arises from the satisfying assurances, that the God and Saviour on whom their hopes rely, will make his grace sufficient for them, and his strength perfect in their weakness.

Consider what numerous, extensive, and important duties the Christian has to per-

form ; what spiritual enemies he has to encounter ; what self-denial is necessary for living unspotted from the world ; what holy diligence is requisite for imitating those bright examples recorded in scripture ; and what severe trials the travellers to heaven have to meet with, from their ignorance, their fluctuating faith, their wandering heart, their many backslidings, and their unhappy defeats.

These things sufficiently evince, that we have need of more than human aid. It is, brethren, the daily grace and unremitting energy of the Holy Spirit, which alone can lead us into all truth, can keep us from falling, and preserve us blameless to the coming of the Lord.

Blessed be the God of our salvation, that the faithful promises of divine grace, to begin, to uphold, to revive, and to carry forward the divine life, are made to all without exception, who have taken refuge in the hope set before them. Illustrious have been the triumphs of this grace in every age ; and the effects of it are visible and astonishing. Under its influence, the proud and churlish have become meek, lowly, gentle, and inof-
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fensive as little children. It has made the covetous and unfeeling to be kindly affectioned, and ready to distribute; the intemperate and impure have been made to abhor the vices in which they formerly delighted; to set their supreme affections on things above, and to be holy in all manner of conversation. This grace has enabled feeble and weak Christians to press forward through ten thousand difficulties; to subdue much opposition; both from the great enemy of their souls, and from deep-rooted corruption; to wax strong in the good fight of faith; to continue faithful unto death, and become more than conquerors at last. Finally, these gracious influences of the Divine Spirit have communicated to believers in Christ such abundant measures of divine illumination, and life, and joy, that they have considered themselves as crucified to the world; and have felt no terror at the approach of death. On the contrary, like those who desire a better country; they say, in the language of Simeon, Lord, now let thy servants depart in peace; we wait for thy salvation; yea, amen, come quickly, Lord Jesus.

Thus, when faith is in vigorous exercise, believers walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. The desires of their souls are to their God, and the remembrance of his name. Their ardours of love to the adorable Redeemer kindle into a sacred flame; their hopes ascend to the Zion above; their joy is almost full; promises come with power to their heart; heaven opens to their view; and the Lamb in the midst of the throne is contemplated by them as receiving the united, unceasing adorations of all the redeemed.

3. By fleeing for refuge to the hope set before us, we enjoy serenity amidst surrounding tribulations, experience a calm tranquillity of soul when tossed by a tempest of affliction, and obtain light and direction under the dark dispensations of Divine Providence.

The language of God by the prophet, is the language of true consolation to those who are thus distressed: "I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight*." Many intricate steps
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* Isa. xlii, 16.

do his people tread ; and often are they led in darkness by a way they know not. Many disastrous events meet them in the world ; and they are so blinded by ignorance, by carnal reasoning, or by unbelief, that they neither see to what purpose those dispensations tend, the mercy of appointing them, nor the power by which their trials are to be supported, or rendered beneficial. But this faithful promise is a staff to support the righteous through the wavering and weary steps of their pilgrimage. This promise is their security that Jehovah will be their Friend, in the most perplexed and disconsolate seasons of their adversity ; that he will give them good counsel by his word and Spirit ; and will bring their complicated calamities to a most gracious issue. Their blindness and ignorance may seem to them to have no termination ; yet he is leading them the right way to the city of habitation. Their darkness and doubts may increase ; but the Lord will be their light, and will give them the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness. In his own time and manner, he will turn the shadows of the evening into a joyful morning. The events
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of life are various, and the comforts of it are ready to cease ; but the God and Saviour in whom believers rely is always the same ; he can neither want wisdom nor power, and his love is infinite, like all his perfections. To every friend of God, therefore, we may apply the same language which he applied to his church of old : He found them in a desert land, and in the waste and howling wilderness ; he led them about, he instructed them, and kept them as the apple of his eye *. That he has done so, will be their triumph when they are brought to the end of their journey ; that he will do so, may now be their hope and plea. The faithful and compassionate Redeemer is declaring to his followers in every age, that in the world they shall have tribulation ; but they who have fled to him for refuge, and have an interest in his great salvation, are dwelling upon that rock which floods cannot overflow. With the Psalmist, they may gladly triumph, We will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more ; our lips shall greatly rejoice when
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* Deut. xxxii. 10.

we praise thee, and our soul, which thou hast redeemed. Or with the prophet, “ Our souls shall be joyful in our God ; for he hath clothed us with the garments of salvation, and covered us with the robe of his righteousness.”

They who can adopt this language have no cause of fear respecting the issue of their trouble. The bitter waters of Mara are converted into salutary streams, and rendered beneficial to their souls. Being accepted in the Beloved, their sins, the bitter ingredients in affliction, are all forgiven ; the God who afflicts is their reconciled Father ; all his ways to them are mercy and truth, as well as love ; and their severest sufferings are only wholesome medicine from a compassionate and skilful Physician.

The redeemed of the Lord, when tossed on the sea of trouble, may look back to the counsels of God, and see the everlasting Father appointing all their trials ; fixing their nature and measure ; arranging the instruments by which they shall be inflicted, how long they shall continue, and what consequences they shall produce.

They may look forward to the haven of
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rest, at which they shall soon arrive ; to the many mansions prepared for them in the better country ; to that period when there shall be no more suffering or sighing, nor any more pain, and where the light afflictions of this momentary life shall be forgotten in those everlasting pleasures which are at the right hand of God.

While they are in the world, their Almighty Redeemer does not leave them destitute of divine support ; for to them he sends the Holy Spirit the Comforter, who visits the house of the mourner, revives the soul of the sorrowful, and imparts to the righteous in Christ a gladness of heart, so refined, that the world cannot give it, and so solid, that no calamities can take it away.

Besides all this, what our Lord said to his first disciples, he still says to all his followers in every part of the world, and in every period of time : “ I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction ; I have brought you into the wilderness, and there will I speak comfortably to you. I call you not servants, but friends, for you are my friends ; and, lo ! I am with you always, even unto the end.”

What

What calamity should destroy the consolation of those who have this Redeemer for their friend? what distress can separate from his love? What disease cannot he heal? what tears cannot he wipe away? and what life cannot he ransom from the grave? He is a brother born for adversity; he was tried in all things as his people are, that he may comfort them in their tribulations; and though exalted to all dignity and honour in heaven, he continues the friend and refuge of all who have confidence in him. He knows their frailty, remembers they are dust, feels for their distresses with tenderest sympathy, says to each of them in the language of tender affection, Fear not, I have redeemed thee; when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine; I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour; a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, a very present help in time of need. Encouraged by these assurances of the Redeemer's presence, support, and blessing, believers sustain their burdens with patience and resignation; they rest in the persuasion of
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of a gracious issue, and they rejoice in tribulation, by rejoicing in Jesus, through whom they have received the atonement, and the bright prospects of future glory.

4. They who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them, may look forward without terror, to the prospect and approach of the dissolution of the earthly tabernacle; and may thereby experience a divine consolation, which nothing derived from this poor world can equal.

The end of all things is at hand : from the dust we were formed, and to the dust we must soon return. Solicitous as we are to support this frail body, it now totters, it falls by gradual decays, and will quickly crumble to its native earth. The man now warm with hope, and busy with unaccomplished designs, will soon drop into the cold and silent grave. The ear which now listens to the voice of the preacher, will be closed in death; and the lips which are pronouncing those words, will moulder in the dust. Death is formidable to the best of men on many accounts; it dissolves every earthly connection, tears us from whatever we hold dear, separates us from every mean of improvement,

ment; introduces us to a dark and unknown state; and its awful issues are judgment and eternity.

At that important period, our sincerest resolutions, our moral virtues, and our devotional exercises, will appear defective and polluted, insufficient to merit heaven, and unable to administer solid comfort to the immortal mind of a dying creature.

Where is the man, who, at the close of life, will make mention of his own righteousness, or works of obedience, as meritorious in the sight of God? Who is he, who will then confide in his own personal accomplishments; or will risk his everlasting safety on the perfection of his own conduct?

Nothing can then satisfy the mind of those, who try themselves by the test of scripture, but that perfect righteousness, which has satisfied all the demands of law and justice; and which is the only foundation of our acceptance with God, and of our title to the blessings of the Redeemer's purchase.

But they who have turned from lying vanities, and have renounced all self-dependance, are, through grace, enabled to
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rely on the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness and strength, for sanctification and redemption. Such persons regard not how soon the call is heard, "Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him." Their glorious Redeemer, by the death which perfected his meritorious obedience, overcame death, and him who had the power of it. By humbling himself to be laid in the tomb, he perfumed the grave, and rendered it a bed of rest to his people. By rising from the dead, he became the first fruits of them that sleep in Jesus; and by ascending into heaven, he has declared himself to be the author of eternal life to all who believe in his name.

Supremely blessed, then, are the dead who die in the Lord. Death has no power to hurt them; by the blood of the Lamb shall this last enemy be overcome. To those who are in Christ, death has lost its horrors, and exchanged its dismal aspect and terrifying nature. This dark valley of death is the avenue to celestial light; this King of terrors is the messenger of peace, conducting the children of God to their Father's house; and this which dissolves their frame, is the servant of the Lord, sent to put off their corruptible

corruptible body, that they may be clothed with immortality and incorruption. Death is swallowed up in victory; and hence believers in Christ may triumph in the words of divine revelation, "Rejoice not over us, O our enemy! for though we fall, we shall rise again; though we sit in darkness, the Lord will be our light; though our heart and flesh fail, Jesus remains the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever; though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, our Saviour and Shepherd will be with us, and will comfort us. Now, therefore, O Lord, let thy servants depart in peace, for our eyes have seen thy salvation."

5. An interest in Christ, and confidence in his merits and mediation, can impart triumphant joy in the solemn prospect of the coming of their Lord to judge the quick and the dead.

At that tremendous day, the elements shall be burnt up, and the earth dissolved; the Judge of all shall descend in his own and in his Father's glory; all the intelligent creation shall appear before his impartial bar; the secrets of every man's heart shall be unfolded; and the final doom of assembled

bled worlds unalterably determined. At such a period, what will prove a safeguard to any of the human race? or who will stand with boldness before the judgment-seat of Christ? They alone who have taken refuge in the Redeemer, from the vengeance of offended justice; whom he has separated for himself by the washing of regeneration; and who are found in Christ, having on that righteousness which is of God by faith.

Arrayed in this robe, the pollution of their depraved nature is removed, the imperfection of their obedience is covered, and they appear comely in the sight of Omniscience; not blameless only, but beautiful and adorned; fit for inheriting with the saints in light, and worthy to sit at the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Such persons may contemplate the awful solemnities of approaching judgment without terror or dismay: They know in whom they have believed; that he abideth faithful; that he will keep what they have committed to him till the decisive hour; that he will stand on the earth at the last day, and will own them as the children whom the Father has given him.

Then

Then will he announce the sincerity of their faith by the services which they performed on earth, and will testify to men and angels, that as they named the name of Christ, so they departed from iniquity ; and as they received Christ Jesus for wisdom and righteousness, so they did abide in him, and did cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart, walking worthy of the Lord to all well pleasing, and fruitful in every good work. On these good works, however, the saints themselves will, at that solemn hour, build no plea of merit : “ Lord, when saw we thee sick, or in prison, or a stranger, and ministered to thee ? ” The works of righteousness which we have done cannot give us confidence at thy coming ; thou, Lord, didst work all thy works in us ; to thee we render the praise of all we did on earth, and thy righteousness is even now all our salvation. Before heaven and earth, we confess that we have nothing in ourselves wherein to glory ; we stand before thy tribunal with this acknowledgment upon our heart and tongue, that, sinful and unprofitable in ourselves, we are saved by sovereign grace.

Fear

Fear not, then, sincere and humble Christian! The great Judge of all, who has been your Saviour and Lord, is your Friend and Protector. When he comes the second time, it is for your salvation; to raise your sleeping dust; to plead your cause before assembled worlds; and to conduct you to Zion with songs and everlasting rejoicings.

6. Strong consolation is provided for all who have fled to Jesus; for their heavenly Father assures them, that it is his good pleasure to give them the kingdom. “Being justified by faith,” says the apostle Paul, “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we rejoice in hope of the glory of God*.”

Having therefore considered true Christians as admitted into the family of God, through union with the Redeemer; as freed from the bondage of sin, supported in their severest trials, going down with tranquillity to the chambers of the grave, and revived again at the resurrection of the just; let us now consider them, in consequence of their
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* Rom. v. 2.

union with Christ, as admitted to the blessed mansions of their Father's house.

“ I beheld,” said John, “ and, lo ! a great multitude which no man could number, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands ; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, and to the Lamb ! And the angel said, These are they who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb ; therefore are they before the throne *.”

This shall in due time be said of all the redeemed and renewed in Christ ; for Jesus, by dying, not only delivered his people from hell, but purchased heaven ; therefore it is styled in scripture, a purchased possession ; an inheritance of the saints in light ; a crown of glory, which God will give. When the Redeemer finished his work on earth, he ascended up on high, to prepare heaven for all his followers ; and he graciously promised, that yet a little while, and he would come again to receive them to himself, that where he is, they may be also. His people may
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* Rev. vii. 9. 14. 15.

therefore, on the most solid grounds, greatly rejoice in the lively hope of the glory to be revealed. Christ purchased it for them by his precious blood, bequeathes it to them in the new covenant, possesses it for them as their forerunner, and is preparing them for it by all the dispensations of his providence and grace.

You, then, who have built upon the foundation laid in Zion, may lift up your head with joy, for your redemption draweth nigh. When he who is your life shall appear, then shall ye appear with him in glory. You shall be exalted with your risen Head, to a state of celestial glory and uninterrupted consolation. Secure from every danger, unutterably happy, and ravished with everlasting joy, you shall rehearse to surrounding spirits the varied events of your pilgrimage, and invite them to join your unceasing praises.

But, how superior to all our present conceptions, must be the holiness and happiness of heaven! How different from the present state of things, and from that delightful access which saints on earth ever enjoyed with their heavenly Father, in their nearest
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and happiest intercourse ! Here all our services are imperfect and defective, and stained with much weakness and pollution. Our praises and prayers are easily interrupted, and soon grow languid. Here the cares of this world intrude, and mar our most spiritual devotions. Here painful discoveries of unworthiness stop our mouths when pleading for spiritual blessings, and fill our hearts with sorrow ; so that we worship with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

But our celestial, unceasing services above, will be without imperfection or dismay ; no unseen Saviour ; no frowning God ; no vain thoughts, nor foolish imaginations ; no agonizing impressions of unpardoned offences, or of unsubdued corruptions ; but one perpetual, everlasting song of praise to him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and raised us up to be kings and priests to our God.

Then shall we learn, far better than we can do in this world, the meaning and extent of the saying in our text, that they who have laid hold on the hope set before them shall have strong consolation ; or rather, we shall learn that its extent passes all know-

ledge; that after all which has been said concerning heavenly bliss by the most eloquent tongue, or conceived by the most enlarged imagination, there is in it a height and depth, a breadth and length, unsearchable and unbounded.

We conclude the present discourse with one plain observation, from the view we have given you of the Christian's privileges and prospects. Think how great must be the misery of those, who have no part nor lot in the hopes and joys of which we have been speaking; and be sincerely concerned to know if these consolations belong to you. Your days are hastening to an end; you have no security for the continuance of health or life; no certainty that you shall obtain those earthly pleasures which you desire, or, if obtained, that you will enjoy them long. How dreadful, then, to have no comfortable prospect beyond the grave, or no security for joining the society of the saints in light! Be intreated, then, to seek that better part which cannot be taken away; and labour with persevering diligence, that whether living or dying, you may belong to Christ.

Now,

Now, unto him who is able to keep you from falling, to sanctify you wholly in soul, body, and spirit, and to present you blameless before the throne with exceeding great joy, be all blessing, and honour, and glory in the highest, for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XVIII.

THE STRONG CONSOLATION.

HEB. vi. 18.

That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.

IT is astonishing, when all mankind are continually in search after happiness, that so few, are in possession of this inestimable blessing. The reason must be, that men seek it not in that way which God has commanded, and where alone it can be found.

Some suppose that happiness may be found in wealth and great possessions, and therefore

therefore are eager to add field to field, and treasure to treasure, that the world may wonder how rich they are become. Others suppose that it may be found in the gaieties, the amusements, and the follies of life; these give reins to their inclinations, and live according to the criminal desires of their grovelling minds. Others again, that it may be found in the moderate use of lawful comforts, and therefore prudently and wisely endeavour to use the world as not abusing it, remembering that the fashion of it passes away. Such persons do well; they are praise-worthy, and many will extol them; but much more is necessary to produce real happiness of mind. You must possess those principles and views, which will yield you comfort in the time of affliction, when meeting with adversity or unexpected calamities, when laid on a bed of languishing, or at the approach of death.

God has made provision for this substantial blessing in the sacred scriptures; and if short-sighted mortals would direct their attention to the sublime things revealed in them, and embrace the gracious offers there made; instead of fainting in the day of
adversity,

adversity, or complaining of wretchedness amidst surrounding trials, they might, on earth, have an anticipation of that happiness which shall be made perfect in heaven.

Why are so many weary of life, when their worldly prospects are blasted? Why are they so sad, so mournful, so melancholy, and fretful, day after day? And why is it that they enjoy little comfort from all the blessings with which they are loaded? The real reason is, they have no delight in God, and are unconcerned about their immortal souls. Is it happiness, to live in the neglect of the great salvation, or to disregard the counsels and intreaties of our compassionate Redeemer? to continue strangers to the comforts of prayer, to the power of faith, and the life of fellowship? Can those find rest to their souls, who pursue lying vanities, and mind only earthly things? On the contrary, they meet with continual disappointments, complain of the miseries of human life, and deprive themselves of the pure satisfaction which a gracious God has provided for those who have fled to the refuge and hope set forth in the gospel.

In the former divisions of this subject, we
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have shewn you, that by the gospel, ample provision is made for dissipating the fears of awakened sinners, for satisfying every rational desire of the immortal soul, and for affording unshaken serenity of mind under all the approaches of death, judgment, and eternity.

In the present discourse, we intend to demonstrate, that the doctrines, precepts, and ordinances of the gospel, when properly attended to, are calculated to impart unspeakable delight, and growing joy, to all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity.

1. Contemplate the leading doctrines of the gospel, and you will easily perceive their powerful tendency to fill the heart with peace and joy. When believers have fled to Jesus as their refuge and hope, the important truths of his gospel become the guide of their principles, and the source of their consolations. This unerring word, this celestial light, removes the thick cloud which concealed divine things from their view. Their dark, benighted minds are enlightened, and they contemplate the glory of God in the highest, on earth peace, and
good-will

good-will toward men. The gospel unfolds the Lord God omnipotent, ordering all events, doing all things well, and filling heaven and earth with his presence. It unfolds the Son of God, the Beloved of the Father, and Mediator of the new covenant, descending from the mansions of bliss ; suffering for sinners ; making reconciliation, by dying the just for the unjust ; bursting asunder the bonds of the grave ; ascending triumphantly to heaven ; and there living and reigning, to save to the uttermost. It unfolds the Holy Spirit, with all his inestimable benefits and gracious influences, taking up his residence in the heart ; testifying of Christ ; sanctifying believers ; sealing them to the day of complete redemption ; and giving them a pledge and earnest of future glory.

These heavenly truths are the nourishment of their souls, and cordials to their fainting spirits. The knowledge of these truths is so sublime, so interesting, and so important, as to admit of no comparison with the transitory objects of time and sense. Serious and humble Christians can tell, how serene and tranquil the mind becomes, when
fully

fully persuaded of these important truths of salvation. The darkness, perplexity, doubt, and scepticism, which formerly harassed them, are dispelled. Divine truths appear in their native certainty, evidence, and value; and the firm faith of these truths proves an anchor of the soul, under the severest trials of life. The pleasure they experience, in the knowledge and contemplation of these truths, raises their admiration above earthly things, and leads them with holy extacy to exclaim, How excellent, O Lord, is thy loving-kindness! how precious are thy thoughts, how great is thy beauty, and how great thy goodness! O the height and depth, the breadth and length, of the love of God in Christ! it passeth knowledge.

2. Much consolation flows from a willing and persevering compliance with commanded duty. Though our complete redemption is purchased by Christ, and is secured to all who come to him, it does not follow, that those who believe in him, are relieved from their obligations to personal obedience. They are still accountable creatures, and bound by the right of creation, providence, and

and redemption, to comply with the will of God. He connects duty and happiness inseparably together, in every page of the sacred volume. “ It shall be well with the righteous ; their peace shall flow as a river. Blessed is the man, who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly. Wisdom’s ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”

In declaring our duty, and describing what things are honest, pure, lovely, and of good report, the sacred scriptures particularly require supreme love to the God of mercy. Sincere gratitude, habitual reverence, unshaken trust, and unreserved submission, are enjoined as our constant service. Since his hand is in every dispensation, we are to glorify him in all our actions, and trust in his care amidst the darkest scenes of adversity.

Your own mind testifies the reasonableness, the importance, and the comfort of these duties : If you love God, you will take delight in pleasing him ; and the more progress you make in the paths of righteousness, the more satisfaction you will enjoy. Even your imperfect endeavours to comply with
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his will, will give a right direction to the affections of your heart, will release you from the governing influence and tormenting tumult of unsanctified passions; will subdue the dominion of grovelling appetites; will produce noble elevation above all earthly vanities, and will implant a relish for the sublime delights of fellowship with God.

Again, this sacred volume, in declaring our duty to each other, enjoins brotherly kindness and charity; extensive benevolence and well-doing, affectionate compassion and tender sympathy, fidelity and uprightness, justice and integrity, truth and sincerity.

With respect to personal duties, the scriptures require us to be sober, and temperate in the use of worldly enjoyments, to seek the heavenly inheritance, in preference to all temporal comforts; to be humble and condescending, when raised above others by prosperity, abilities, or attainments; to be meek and forgiving, when we are treated unjustly; to be content with such things as we have; to be patient in tribulation; to give God the glory of all our mercies; and to glorify God in soul, body, and spirit.

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These are not severe, but reasonable services, especially when we consider the great and precious promises made to the faithful; that the Lord their Redeemer will strengthen them to do all these things, and that his Holy Spirit will work in them to will and to do whatever is required. The firm persuasion of this filled the inspired apostle with holy fortitude and heavenly joy; and hence he records, for our instruction, the strong consolation he experienced in the faithful promise of God, “ My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

Let these few general observations convince you, that the more strictly and uniformly you conform to the precepts of scripture, your tranquillity and happiness will be more increased. This is widely different from the maxims of the men of the world. They are deluded by worldly pleasures, and strangers to divine comfort. They account real religion a melancholy service, fly from it as from an infectious distemper, and endeavour to discourage others from walking in the paths of strict godliness. They lay it down as a certain maxim, that to be truly
religious

religious is to be cheerless, unhappy, and wretched.

But why admit the testimony of strangers and enemies in a matter of which they know nothing, and in a cause which they wish to injure?

If you will listen to the testimony of others, attend to the experience of those who have walked in the ways of pure and undefiled religion, who have made the experiment, and who best know what is the nature and tendency of purity, self-denial, and godliness. Such righteous persons will with one consent assure you, that the opinion of the world is unfounded, and that the ways of Christ, who is the true essential Wisdom, are ways of pleasantness. Thus Moses, though raised to independence and rank in the court of Pharaoh, and though illustrious above all the great men of Egypt for wisdom and courage, yet made little account of all the honours of a kingdom, when put in competition with the service of God; “ he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, and chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin; he esteemed the reproach

reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.”

David was king of Israel, and in full possession of the crown, when he gives a decided preference to spiritual enjoyment: “Thy testimonies give me more joy than all riches. Many say, Who will shew us any good? then say I, Lord, lift on me the light of thy countenance. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased.”

Solomon had entered deeply into the pleasures of sin, and, on this account, was well qualified to make the comparison between the animal and spiritual life. Consider, therefore, the testimony and record which he has left for our instruction in righteousness: “The way of transgression is bitterness and death; but happy is the man who findeth wisdom.” Happy in the present life, as well as in the future, is the man who has the principles and habits of heavenly wisdom implanted in his soul, to regulate his temper, language, and conduct.

We readily admit, that complete happiness is not enjoyed, even by the servants of
God,

God, while they remain on earth. They are still in a state of imperfection and trouble; they perceive in themselves daily cause of deep humiliation, and godly sorrow for sin. They often feel the distresses of life with much anguish of spirit; and, like the children of Israel, are often discouraged because of the way*. Still, however, amidst all their accumulated sorrows, it is heavenly wisdom, it is grace in exercise, it is the religion of the scriptures, which bears up their spirits, and imparts abiding peace and substantial satisfaction. Those men are truly wise, then, who have repented of their iniquities, who have returned unto the Lord, and who walk in his ways; for even in this world they can rejoice in God through Christ Jesus, and can triumph in the lively hope of future glory. The promise of God, connected with the obedience of his people, is the security of their happiness. “O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea †.”

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3. Humble

* Numbers xxi. 4.

† Isa. xlviii. 18.

3. Humble and serious Christians experience this consolation, when they are engaged in the worship of God, in the public or private ordinances of religion.

Who can describe the satisfaction they enjoy in secret prayer, when they open their hearts unto God, and make known all their requests by supplication with thanksgiving? You know, Christians, what you feel, when, reflecting on the guilt from which you have been delivered, you are brought to look on the Almighty as your compassionate heavenly Father; interested in your concerns, comforting you under your distresses, and promising to guide you by his counsel, and to supply all your wants from his fulness. In such circumstances you cast your cares on God, and, like Hannah, having poured out your complaint, and having prayed unto the Lord, your countenance is no more sad; for you are persuaded, that the God of Israel will grant the petition you have asked. Prayer is not, with those who seek God in sincerity, a lifeless form, but the language of their heart, and the breathing, as it were, of their soul; they wrestle with holy earnestness, that they may
obtain

obtain the desired blessing. Nor do they confine prayer to solemn stated seasons ; for, in the midst of their worldly business, their sincere, fervent supplication ascends to the throne of God, and they derive from on high, counsel and strength.

Again : who can describe the inward satisfaction which they enjoy in the perusal of the word of God ? Here, as in an inexhaustible mine, they dig by faith, and discover the richest treasures of divine grace. Hence, as from the wells of salvation, they draw waters to refresh their weary souls. This word is a light to their feet, and a lamp to their path. By the purity of the law they are humbled ; by the promises of the gospel they are revived ; the precepts of the word direct, its examples animate ; and the bright prospect of immortal life which it unfolds, raises the affections above this world, and gives them a foretaste of what they shall know hereafter. They search the scriptures with diligence, humility, and delight. They converse with the sacred volume, examine its doctrines, observe its precepts, and rejoice in its promises. The oracles of truth are their counsellors in times of difficulty,

and their comfort when they are afflicted. They find them more precious than gold, and therefore bind them as signs in their hands, and treasure them up in their memory.

Great, also, is the benefit which they reap from the public institutions of religious worship. They behold the glory of the Lord, feel his presence, and meditate on his loving-kindness, in the sanctuary. They acknowledge, with David, that their souls long for the courts of the living God, and that they prefer Jerusalem to their chiefest joy. Warmed with sacred devotion, the language of their heart is, "Blessed is the man whom thou choolest, and causest to approach unto thee. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! We surely shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy holy place." In the house of the Lord, they learn the things which belong to their everlasting peace; they partake of those divine consolations which illuminate and revive their souls. Being strengthened with all might in the inner man, they experience the truth of that saying, They who follow on to know the Lord, shall both know and enjoy him.

him. Ask those who fear God, if, when engaged in those public religious exercises, and worshipping in the sanctuary, they have not known the God of all grace lifting upon their souls the light of his countenance; giving them to behold the King in his beauty; shedding abroad his love in their heart; making them praise him with joyful lips; and enabling them to use the triumphant language of scripture, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with the Son, through the Holy Spirit.”

Lastly, The sacrament of the Supper has a special tendency to strengthen the joy, and to promote the peace, of the people of God. In that sacred ordinance, the perfections of God are displayed in their united harmony; righteousness and truth meet together; justice and mercy embrace each other. There, also, our gracious Redeemer is represented in every amiable and attractive view, as altogether lovely; as coming from Edom with dyed garments, travelling in the greatness of his strength, and mighty to save. There also believers hold communion with the whole Christian family, with the church on earth and church in heaven, and engage
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in those sublime contemplations, which are the sources of holy admiration to angels above and saints below.

In these public or private ordinances of grace, the influences of the Holy Spirit descend upon the soul. The languishing graces of the Christian revive, and he is ready to exclaim with the saints of old, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God! Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance." "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste, and his banner over me was love." Thus it has been with those who worship God in the way he has appointed, and thus it may still be with you; for the Lord's hand is not shortened, nor his ear heavy. With him is the residue of the Spirit; his word, his worship, his ordinances, are always the same; his promises can never fail. Your God is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever. Devise, then, liberal things, for he giveth liberally, and upbraideth

braideth not. Let your desires be enlarged, and he will give you such measures of communion on earth, as shall be a pledge of nobler intercourse in heaven ; a happy preparation for the rivers of pleasure at God's right hand, and a present satisfying confirmation of the animating truth in our text, that strong consolation is provided for all those who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel.

I conclude the discourses on this important subject, by some practical improvement of what has been said.

First, Our text gives no consolation to those who despise the Redeemer, and reject his word ; who presumptuously suppose, that without revelation, without the gospel, without Christianity, they can secure for themselves peace and safety both here and hereafter.

There are too many in this highly privileged land of gospel light, who reject this blessed dispensation of grace, which God has given for the recovery and happiness of the human race. Such persons extol the
powers

powers of human reason as fully sufficient to direct them to happiness, and take refuge in the uncertain conjectures of vain philosophy. With bold impiety, they revile the scriptures as cunningly-devised fables; and with hardened impenitence, they scoff at the religion of the Bible as priestcraft and hypocrisy. Are their ways, ways of pleasantness? or does their light shine in a dark place? Can those be happy, who wander in obscurity and doubt; who trample under foot the invaluable principles of their early years; and who resist the intruding thoughts of God, judgment, and eternity? I ask themselves, whether their happiness bears any proportion to their infidelity? or if they are not like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, and their mind inexpressibly miserable, even when their countenance is gay? It is not wonderful that they feel in this manner; for it is no easy matter to extinguish the evidences of divine inspiration; to suppose that human sagacity could contrive what this glorious gospel reveals; or to believe that its sublime truths, and exalted hopes, could be the work of fancy or imposture.

Such persons must occasionally feel some
strong

strong impressions of the truth of scripture ; some secret, alarming forebodings of future existence ; some earnest desires for rest and peace of mind ; some serious thoughts of death and judgment ; and some secret longings for a sure title to everlasting happiness. They may not perhaps acknowledge it ; yet sometimes they must think, that they would have enjoyed far more inward peace and pleasure, if they had held fast the faith in which their fathers lived and died. The fault is in themselves if they do not. Let them search the scriptures ; let them examine, with calm impartiality, the inspiration, the importance, the authority of this sacred volume, and they will perceive such proofs of its wisdom and majesty, such suitability to the real circumstances of man, such glory, energy, and power, as must constrain them to own, that God is here ; that the law of the Lord is perfect ; that his word makes wise the simple, converts the sinner, rejoices the heart, and most justly claims our firmest belief, our warmest admiration, and our most willing obedience.

Such is the heavenly religion which the infidel

infidel rejects. Pushed on by his unbridled passions, he quarrels with a revelation which is holy in its nature; unwilling to be restrained in his pleasures, he dislikes both the doctrines and precepts of scripture; and, persisting in his folly, he lays up a sure foundation for prevailing disquiet through life, for unutterable horrors at a dying hour, and for everlasting misery in a future state. Thus their way is their folly; but Wisdom is justified of her children, and they who find her do find life, and shall see good.

Second, Our text addresses itself to the careless and impenitent.

Such persons are seeking for peace and consolation, but not in the way which God has appointed for its attainment. They expect happiness in vice, in pursuing with eagerness the path of folly, and in hardening themselves in a life of intemperance, impurity, or dissipation; their delight is to indulge in their depraved appetites, and they live as if they were not accountable to God, as if there was no hell to fear, and no heaven to enjoy; they assume a kind of impious boldness in the presence of their companions,
and

and boast of their freedom from the prejudices of education, and from the fetters of superstition: But with all their pretended courage, they have many alarming, solitary, cheerless hours; often do they start with secret horror, when conscience upbraids them for their irreligion, or neglect of their everlasting concerns; for their cruelty to their own souls; for their guilt in corrupting others; and for their folly in expecting that God will deal with them in mercy, while they obstinately refuse to obey his commandments. “How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer;

answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me : For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord : they would none of my counsel ; they despised all my reproof : Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices *.” Even in the present life, sinful pleasures are often bitter to the sinner ; the path of transgression proves far more rugged than the path of righteousness ; and it occasions more toil to persevere in the ways of vice, than to press forward in the right way to the city of habitation. In this life they find little satisfaction in a course of wickedness, and must acknowledge in their calm moments, that their own iniquity corrects them ; and that their deviations from the path of commanded duty yields them neither peace of mind, nor honour, nor applause, nor comfort : Such a life often inflames even to torment their ungovernable desires ; degrades their reason ; prepares the way for the keenest remorse ; and hurries them on to crimes, to despair, and to ruin.

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* Prov. i. 22.—31.

In addition to this, consider the dreadful prospects of such transgressors beyond death and the grave; for thus testifies the true and faithful word against all such: "They that are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness; for them is reserved tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath: For the Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God, and who obey not the gospel. If they who despised Moses' law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy, who have trodden under foot the Son of God, and have counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing, and have done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel †? Choose ye the better part, which cannot be taken away ‡. Seek.

* Heb. x. 29.—31.

† Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

‡ Luke x. 42.

Seek wisdom * ; walk in wisdom's ways," for they are pleasantness and peace, and will assuredly give you fortitude through life, peace at death, and rivers of pleasure at the right hand of God for ever.

Third, Having addressed those who deny the truths of the gospel, or who are indifferent to them, we shall next attempt a solemn and serious exhortation to the youth of both sexes, to a young and rising generation, and especially to the children of pious parents. In your happiness, ye young and gay, our heart feels peculiarly interested ; and for your instruction these discourses have been principally intended. Important and perilous is your situation : With your present sentiments and habits are connected your future safety and happiness through life. You are exposed to peculiar temptations, while you little suspect the numberless stratagems devised by Satan for entangling your inexperienced youth, the many corruptions which lie lurking in your heart, and the many dangerous allurements you may have to encounter : But if, through sovereign grace,
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* Prov. iv. 5.—8.

you are brought, in early years, to prefer the ways of real religion as the only true path of wisdom and peace ; if you seek your chief delight in knowing, loving, and obeying God ; if you set the Lord before you, and make his word your guide, companion, and consolation ; then, as Solomon expresses it *, you will walk safely, and not stumble ; you will lie down, and not need to be afraid ; and you will find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

You have soon to enter on the active business of an ensnaring world, when you will have to resist many dangerous allurements, insinuating companions, bewitching amusements, worldly maxims, ambitious projects, and fleshly lusts. But if you live under the influence of the religion of Christ, it will guard you from these snares ; check the violence of your passions ; restrain your inordinate desires ; guide your aims, your plans, and your pursuits ; fortify you against temptations ; lead you to the prudent, persevering performance of the duties of life ;

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* Prov. iii. 23, 24.

sweeten its innocent enjoyments ; and teach you to delight in God, and to cleave to him with full purpose of heart.

If God shall spare you to riper years, to be encompassed with the cares and the difficulties of life, you will then experience, more than ever, the value of vital religion, and the happiness of intercourse with that God who can defend from every danger, and bestow every comfort : His presence and his grace will direct your way ; deliver you from the path in which destroyers go ; render you useful in your station ; and make your light so to shine before others, that you may glorify your heavenly Father.

In prosperous circumstances, cleaving to Christ will enable you to overcome the world ; prevent immoderate attachment to present enjoyments ; and teach you to use the world as not abusing it, because the fashion thereof fast passeth away.

In the days of adversity, you will find the utter insufficiency of worldly aid, or natural fortitude, and will experience the bliss of those who can betake themselves for shelter to that faithful High-Priest, who well knows what strong temptations mean ; who

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is touched with the feeling of their infirmities; and proves a covert from the tempest, and a refuge from the storm.

In the decay of nature, and infirmities of old age, the religion of Christ, and fellowship with God, showers down blessings on the hoary head; makes strong in the Lord; revives the fainting soul with the faithful promises of an unchanging God; opens to view new prospects of immortal glory; and enlarges the joy of the expanding soul, by hearing the Saviour say, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me."

Such is the peace and pleasure you may expect, and will experience, in following on to know the Lord, and in going forward from strength to strength, until you appear before God in Zion.

But, alas! many of the rising generation enter on life giddy and thoughtless, ignorant and unprincipled, depraved and obstinate. Shunning the society of those who fear God, they neglect the duties of the closet, turn their Sabbaths into days of worldly pleasure, and gradually become the very slaves of sin.

If it is thus with any of you, before you

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proceed

proceed farther, stop for a moment to consider what profit you shall have in your giddy, your guilty, your profane ways. Think what remorse you are treasuring up, what ruin you are bringing upon yourselves, and what provocation you are giving to that God who made and upheld you, who formed you for his glory, and who justly demands your supreme love, and your daily homage.

Let, then, the terrors and the mercies of the Almighty, determine the young to regard in earnest the one thing needful, and to chuse that better part, of which neither earth nor hell can rob them. Receive the anointed Redeemer in all his characters as Mediator. Take his yoke upon you, for it is light and easy; and give yourselves unto the Lord in an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten. Thus it shall be well with you in all the pilgrimage of life, and when time shall be no more. Thus, united to Christ, and clothed with his perfect righteousness, you shall be the children of God; “and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ,” of an inheritance eternal in the heavens.

Now,

Now, unto him who alone can keep you from falling, and present you blameless before his throne with exceeding joy; to God only wise, to the great God our Saviour, be blessing, and honour, and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XIX.

THE CHRISTIAN JOURNEY.

NUMBERS x. 29:

And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you : come thou with us, and we will do thee good ; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.

THERE is a broad way which leads to destruction ; and we are assured by the inspired volume, that there are many who walk therein.

The principles of infidelity, in those who entertain them, set at nought all the gracious discoveries which God has revealed in the scriptures. Men of licentious conduct
delight

delight in gratifying their own earthly, sensual, corrupt passions, by walking according to the course of this world, and by fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. There are unrighteous men, who violate their engagements and obligations; who lead not quiet and peaceable lives in their several stations and relations; and who live not in love one towards another. There are ungodly men, who call not on the Lord, nor walk according to his will; who seldom worship him in the sanctuary, and seldom pray to him in secret; who neither consult his word, nor obey his commandments, nor delight in his promises, nor dread his threatenings.

All such persons are walking in the broad way which leads to destruction; living in the indulgence of carnal appetites; neglecting the great salvation; and depriving themselves of all the sublime delights which flow from communion with God.

But, though many in the world are living carelessly and at ease, pursuing earthly things, laying up treasures only for time; yet, glory be to God! many have been roused from their fatal security; are translated from darkness to marvellous light; brought

brought to chuse the better part, which can never be taken away ; and constrained, by sovereign grace, to give all diligence that they may be found of God in peace.

All such may safely say, with Moses in our text, We are journeying to the place of which God himself hath spoken. All such will feel the benevolent desire, that their companions and kindred may unite with them in travelling to the goodly land ; and all such will be disposed to proclaim with triumph, the gracious things which God has promised for the consolation of his children.

Without farther introduction, it is proposed, through divine assistance, to direct your attention to three particulars suggested by the text. I. The character of the true Israel of God ; they are journeying to the place of which a faithful God has spoken. II. The animating consideration which encourages heavenly travellers to hold on their way, or the good which Jehovah has promised to his people. III. The affectionate and salutary counsel which they give to
others,

others, "Come with us, and we will do thee good."

I. Direct your meditations to the representation given in the text, of all the true Israel of God; they are journeying to the place of which God has spoken.

When God, according to his promise, brought the posterity of Abraham from the bondage of Egypt, and from the perils of the Red Sea, he set before them the sure prospect of a rich inheritance, which in due time they should possess. In this land they were to dwell safely, and enjoy abundance of good things. Here they were to sit serene under their own fig-tree, and be fed with the finest of the wheat. Their flocks and their folds were to be multiplied, and their cattle to be strong for labour. Their barns were to be filled with plenty; their vallies to be clothed with corn; their trees to be as the cedars of Lebanon; and their flowers as the Rose of Sharon.

Though all this only constituted an earthly Canaan, yet such promises and prospects gladdened their spirits in the wilderness, sweetened the labours of their pilgrimage, and

and smoothed the roughest steps of their journey.

But under the gospel, the God of glory speaks to his spiritual Israel of a far better inheritance, of a heavenly Canaan, a state of unmingled and eternal felicity. In this land all the ransomed of the Lord shall for ever dwell ; sorrow and sighing shall be done away, and the days of their mourning be ended ; the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall lead them to fountains of living water, and wipe away all tears from their eyes. They shall be for ever with the Lord ; shall see him as he is ; shall be like him in their finite measure ; and shall be exalted to inconceivable joy, arising from his immediate presence, and from the uninterrupted enjoyment of his love.

That future state of perfect knowledge, purity, and bliss, our God has promised to his Israel : He has assured them, that there remains a rest for his people ; that it is secured for them, by the perpetual mediation of his own Son ; and that had it not been so, he would not have called himself their God, nor would have said, that he loved them with an everlasting love.

To that goodly land of immortal glory, the thoughts, hopes, and pursuits of the righteous in Christ are directed. This distinguishing description of their sentiments and pursuits, is the particular subject to which we would now wish to direct your serious and devout attention: "We are journeying to the place of which the Lord hath said, I will give it you."

1. Consider their setting out in the journey, and how this is begun.

In the days of their thoughtlessness and security, they followed lying vanities, and wandered from mountain to hill in search of rest; they expected satisfaction in sensual gratifications, and sought no higher happiness, than the wealth, honours, or pleasures of this uncertain, poor, unsatisfying world.

While thus eager in search after temporal good, and in the acquisition of earthly joys, a divine light has shone into their mind. The scenery of this world is discovered to be fast vanishing from their view; and they are convinced, that though they could gain all the treasures, or could enjoy all the delights of time, all would be unavailing, if their immortal soul shall perish for ever.

Then

Then it is, that they are arrested in the midst of their folly, and are brought to set their faces toward Zion, and to inquire the way thither. No longer can they be satisfied with the polluted streams of earthly pleasures, but pant for access to the fountain of living waters. Then the sincere language of their hearts is, O Lord our God, early will we seek thee ; our souls thirst for thee in this dry and parched land, to behold thy glory, to feel thy power, to have our treasure in heaven, and to be preparing for the mansions above.

Then also, a deep conviction of guilt and depravity fills them with fearful forebodings of future wrath, and with the consciousness that in every duty, in every attainment, in every religious service, they have come far short of the glory of God. This leads them to ask, with anxious solicitude, What shall we do to be saved ? or wherewithal can we come before the Holy One of Israel ? Impressed with the infinite importance of redemption through the blood of Jesus ; dreading the condemnation of loving darkness rather than light, and eager to be animated with the lively hope of future glory, they

they count all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ ; and they give all diligence, by prayer and supplication, by reading and hearing the word, and by devout attendance upon ordinances, both public and private, to be found in Christ, to be renewed in their mind, to be setting their affections on things above, and to be living under the powers of the world to come.

Thus the good work of grace is begun in those who are renewed by the Spirit. They renounce temporal enjoyments as their chief good. They know that there is an eternity of bliss awaiting the faithful. They choose this better part, which cannot be taken away, and gladly submit to Jesus as their Leader and King.

Thus, acknowledging him who is greater than Moses, they submit implicitly to his direction ; and, being rescued from the house of their bondage, they enter with alacrity and joy upon the narrow way which leads them to life.

Brethren, are such your feelings ? have you known the things which belong to your everlasting peace, and received the Saviour with your whole hearts, for his whole salvation ?

tion? Has the Holy Spirit, who converts sinners from the error of their ways, wrought in you a real change of heart and life? and have you been determined, in a day of divine power, to go up through the wilderness, leaning on your gracious Redeemer, as the best beloved of your soul?

Then give the whole glory to the God of all grace; for blessed are the people who are in such a state: They have known the joyful sound, they have fled for refuge to the hope set before them; they shall go from strength to strength, and in due time shall appear before God in Zion.

2. Journeying to the goodly land of promise, implies perseverance, and progress in the divine life.

It was not sufficient that Israel of old should depart from Egypt, and should relinquish for ever the abominations of that land of bondage; they had to travel forward through the wilderness, and to hold on their way, till they should arrive safely at the land of promise.

In the same manner, fellow-travellers to Zion, you must not only renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, with all ungodliness

ness and worldly lusts ; but you must strive more and more after conformity to the precepts of scripture ; to the imitation of Jesus, when he dwelt with men on earth ; and to the example of those saints whose names are recorded with honour in this sacred volume. Not only must you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and be the children of God through faith in Christ, but you must add to your faith, virtue and fortitude, patience and submission to the divine will, godliness and devotion, brotherly kindness and charity ; not only must you be blameless and without rebuke, but you must follow the things which are true, pure, lovely, and of good report ; and must shine brighter and brighter to the perfect day. Warmed with gratitude for redeeming love, and filled with holy ambition to grow in grace, you must press forward for the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus. You must labour to attain a greater measure of unfeigned humility, of stedfast faith, of spiritual joy, of lively hope, of heavenly contemplations, and of daily intercourse with God. You must remember that you are not of this world, but are chosen out of it ; and therefore you must not be conformed

conformed to its maxims or manners, its pleasures or pursuits, its aims or motives. You must seek far nobler consolations, very different from those which flow from the abundance of corn and wine, from the increase of flocks and herds, from full barns or fruitful seasons ; and you must learn to rejoice in God, when the fields do not yield their increase, and when the flocks are cut off from the fold. This is vital Christianity, this is growing in grace ; and these are the marks of travellers to Zion. They pass the time of their sojourning in the fear of the Lord. They confess themselves pilgrims on earth ; they endure, as seeing him who is invisible ; they look not chiefly to what is seen and temporal, but to what is unseen and eternal ; to an unseen God, an almighty Saviour, a well-ordered covenant, and everlasting glory.

When it is otherwise with believers, they are said to slumber and sleep ; they grow languid in the divine life : and this, alas ! is too often the case with those who are partakers of the heavenly calling. Whence arise the backslidings, the depressions, and the inconsistencies of the people of God ?
whence

whence their want of unclouded hope of heaven, their want of strong consolation in Christ, and their not going on their way rejoicing? From what, but from their want of perseverance and ardour; from their conforming so much to the fashionable manners of a dissipated age; and from their seeking happiness or comfort in the amusements of an ensnaring world? If you wish to be not only real, but eminent Christians; to be filled not only with peace; but with joy in believing; to make your light to shine before others; you must have respect to all the commandments of your heavenly Father; serve him with uniform fidelity, give to him an undivided heart, and supreme affections; and you must endeavour to see his hand in all temporal events, to praise him for all your mercies, and to submit the disposal of your lot to his unerring wisdom.

We acknowledge, men and brethren, though these desirable heights of piety may be attained on earth, that they are not easy attainments; and that, if we would ascend the hill of Zion, it must be through much opposition, through fighting, and through dangers. Hence we remark,

3. That

3. That our journeying to Zion implies difficulties encountered, resisted, and overcome. These may be expected, and will be experienced. If, indeed, we are the people of God, our way through the wilderness will not only be by rugged paths, encompassed with briers and thorns, but every step will be disputed, and we can only advance by combat and victory.

Our spiritual enemies carry on the warfare with much address ; they are well acquainted with our various conditions and tempers, with our weaknesses and wants ; and know how to accommodate their temptations to our several circumstances. Hence it is that they sometimes attack us by secret devices, and sometimes by open violence. At one time, they seek to shake the foundations of our faith, by infusing unbelieving or blasphemous suggestions into the mind ; next, they try to lull us asleep in the tents of spiritual security and sloth ; and again, they agitate our unstable hearts by the splendour of the world, and the allurements of carnal pleasure.

Our journey in this world is through an enemy's country, our life is a daily warfare,
and

and our spiritual foes are numerous, artful, and strong. Do you inquire, who are those malicious and skilful enemies, which war against the soul? Our answer is, unbelief, enmity to our God and to his Christ, pride and passion, covetousness and carnality, the perplexing cares or captivating nature of worldly pursuits; the flattery and frowns of our kindred and companions; the deep-rooted corruptions of our own deceitful hearts; and the fiery darts of Satan; darts which attack us with unexpected fury, with resistless force, and in quick succession; fiery darts which irritate and inflame, which cause anguish and alarm, and which leave us bleeding and feeble, under the painful wounds we have received in our conflicts with temptation.

Had we to contend, in our own strength, against those combined and relentless enemies, we might justly say, Soon shall we fall by their hand: If we have contended with footmen, and they have wearied us, how shall we vanquish the horsemen of Egypt, and the chariots of war! If we have fainted in the land of our so-

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journing,

journing, how shall we pass through the swellings of Jordan ! If the heart and flesh so often fail amidst purest ordinances, and prosperous dispensations, how shall we hold on our way, and hold out to the end, against all the united influence of surrounding trials, of increasing frailty, of indwelling corruption, of the stratagems of Satan, and of harassing doubts !

This, humble Christian, is thy refuge and consolation. You can depend on the Lord God omnipotent, who is on your side ; who keepeth truth for ever ; who is able to keep you through faith to his great salvation ; who has promised to make you a conqueror at last ; whose love is boundless ; whose dominion is universal ; whose grace is exceeding abundant, above all you can think ; and whose faithfulness can never fail.

If this God is your God, you must be safe ; he whose power created heaven and earth, can surely uphold you amidst all dangers, and against all enemies ; he whose wisdom guides the stars in their courses, can direct all your ways, and can perfect what-
ever

ever concerns you ; and he whose love is without variableness, or any shadow of turning, can enable the feeblest of his followers to thresh the mountains, and can save them with an everlasting salvation. Amen.

SERMON XX.

THE CHRISTIAN JOURNEY.

NUMBERS X. 29.

And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you : come thou with us, and we will do thee good ; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.

WE proceed now to some illustration of the animating motive, which encourages heavenly travellers to hold on their way ; which motive is contained in the last part of the text, " For the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

This is the most delightful subject which can engage the meditation of mortal men.

When

When viewed in the light of revelation, and with the eye of faith, it opens to us scenes infinitely various, inimitably sublime, and of boundless extent.

God has spoken good concerning his people. A righteous, holy, omnipotent, offended God, has forgiven all our iniquity, and turned away all his wrath. We are restored to his favour, and adopted into his family. He has rescued us from misery, and promised to perfect what concerns us. These blessings, devoutly to be wished for, are revealed in his word. In the same divine revelation, God has made certain and ample provision for our obtaining every supply which can be necessary for maintaining our friendship with himself; for increasing our intercourse with heaven; for cleansing us from all iniquity; for carrying forward the marks and evidences of spiritual regeneration; for comforting us under all the tribulations of this imperfect state; and for preparing us to finish our course with joy.

Whatever may be our situation in life, or employment in his service, his presence shall be with us, to guide, to protect, to govern, to comfort, and to deliver us. Though we
were

were banished to distant regions ; cast into a fiery furnace ; doomed to a dreary dungeon ; bereaved of every friend ; dwelling solitary in the wilderness ; encompassed with hosts of foes ; threatened with perils, and famine, and sword ; feeling the decay of the house of this tabernacle ; or bidding farewell to all mortal scenes ; still his everlasting arms will surround us, and his inspiring Spirit will whisper to our fainting heart, “ Lo ! I am with you always, even to the end ; I will never leave you, nor forsake you ; I will guide you by my counsel, and bring you to my glory.”

The Father of mercies has made with us an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things, and sure. The Saviour of mankind has purchased for us a kingdom which fadeth not away. The Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier and our Comforter, and graciously undertakes to prepare us for the business and the bliss of heaven. Neither the legions, nor all the powers of hell, can prevent us from inheriting with the saints in light. The time, manner, and all the circumstances of our death, are arranged by unerring wisdom, and by infinite love. At the judgement
ment

ment day, Jesus shall acknowledge us before assembled worlds ; and, through a blessed eternity, we shall be ever with the Lord, shall see him as he is, and shall be satisfied with his likeness.

Again : All the promises recorded in the sacred volume, pertaining to the life which now is, and to immortal happiness beyond the grave, are yea and amen in Christ, and are ours through him. All the threatenings recorded in the same scriptures are transferred to our glorious Surety, and cancelled as to us. The God of glory is our perpetual defence ; the Lamb in the midst of the throne our perpetual Friend ; angels our kindred, and heaven our home.

These are blessings devoutly to be wished for ; and, holy and beloved travellers to Zion, these blessings are yours ! This is the great goodness which our God has in store for all his people ; and these are the good things he has spoken concerning them.

If, therefore, you have indeed received Jesus the Lord, both as your Saviour to redeem you, and your King to reign over you ; if you are inquiring what is the true way of inheriting eternal life, and are setting
your

your faces to Zion ; if you are pressing forward, and labouring to abound more and more in whatever is well pleasing and acceptable to God ; you may take the full comfort of these faithful promises and precious privileges. Remember that they are sealed by two immutable things, his promise and his oath, whereby it is impossible for God to lie ; and rejoice in the persuasion, that they shall be accomplished in your experience while you live and when you die, and through everlasting ages.

Before I proceed to what remains of this discourse, I intreat you to examine yourselves, and know whether you are amongst the number of the true Israel of God. On this your safety, your happiness, your all depends. And to assist you in this examination, I shall mention three plain marks of God's people, without attempting to illustrate them. *1st*, They sincerely love prayer, and continue instant in secret devotion ; hence Jacob obtained the name of Israel, because he wrestled in supplication with the angel of the covenant, saying, " I cannot let thee go, unless thou bless me *." *2dly*, They confess

* Gen. xxxii. 28.

fess themselves pilgrims and sojourners so long as they are in this world ; thus did Jacob, and all the patriarchs ; and thus they testified that they sought a better country, even an heavenly. *Sdly*, They humble and loathe themselves before God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity ; like the children of Israel in the wilderness, when convinced of their ingratitude and distrust, their murmuring and rebellion.

If, through sovereign grace, these marks of salvation are in some degree applicable to you ; if you indeed are in the number of the people of God, delighting in prayer, separated from a present evil world, seeking the way to Zion with your faces thitherward, and travelling onwards to glory ; if it is thus with you, you have reason at all times to adore, to wonder, and to love. The triumphs of your faith, and the accents of your praise, should be unceasing. But, at the same time, how sincerely will your hearts grieve to think, that so many neglect the great salvation, and, with obstinate perseverance, are holding on in the broad way which leads to destruction ! You cannot, therefore, but earnestly desire, that your children,

children, your companions, and your kindred, may join with you in setting their faces to Zion, and may continue through life to press forward, with keen alacrity, to “the place of which the Lord hath said, I will give it you.” And this is the next part of the subject to which we direct your attention.

III. The affectionate and salutary counsel which travellers to Zion address to others: “Come with us, and we will do thee good.” This implies a sincere concern for the salvation of our kindred and companions. The text is the address of Moses to his father-in-law; he was grieved that Hobab should leave their camp, and thus deprive himself of all the great goodness which God had promised to Israel. Moses therefore intreats Hobab to unite his lot with the seed of Abraham, to share in their difficulties, that in due time he might partake of their privileges and inheritance.

This affectionate address implies also a full conviction, that it never can be well with those who have not their portion with
God's

God's children, who worship him not in spirit, and who rejoice not in Christ Jesus.

Again, the language of the text intimates the full persuasion that there is room for the most ignorant, estranged, and hopeless of their kindred, companions, and relatives. Hobab, like his father Raguel, had been devoted to the worship of idols in Midian; a stranger to the God of Israel; and perhaps a reviler of what Moses had told him of God's covenant with Abraham: yet, having seen the descendants of the father of the faithful, rescued from the cruel bondage of Egypt, conducted through the perils of the Red Sea, and thus brought far on their way to the promised land, he begins to think, that it must be well with the righteous: Therefore, Moses endeavours to impress upon his mind, an abiding conviction, that there is no God like the God of Israel; and that happy are the people who are under his protection, and are partakers of his favour.

Taking this view of the subject, I might exhort pious parents to address their children, and pious masters their household, in
language

language similar to the text; beseeching all to whom their influence extends, to remember their latter end, to prepare for dying, to join the company of those who are the real people of God; to unite in the same duties, to share in the same dangers, to aspire after the same attainments, with the travellers to the heavenly Zion.

But, considering that we are now assembled together in the sanctuary, and standing as it were upon the highest step which conducts to the altar of God, with all the solemnities of a communion-service in our view, suffer me, beloved brethren, in the united character of friend, counsellor, and pastor, to beseech you to come with us, to share in the unsearchable riches of Christ, to seek the treasures which never wax old, and to rejoice in the blessings of salvation, and in the hopes of everlasting glory.

I say to the young, Come with us, and we will do you good: Remember your Creator and Redeemer, as an affectionate child remembers his pious parents, when separated from them by the dispensations of providence. Remember your Creator and Redeemer,

deemer, as generous youths remember the liberal benefactor who has clothed them, and fed them, and enriched them. Remember your Creator and Redeemer, as condemned malefactors gratefully remember the pardoning monarch who has released them from the terrors of death. My dear young friends, do you aspire after honour and applause, or after wealth and treasures? "Come with us, and we will do you good;" we will give you durable riches and righteousness; treasures which wax not old, and a crown of glory which fadeth not away. For we are warranted by a faithful and unchangeable God, to testify to you, that if you are Christ's, all is yours, life and death, things present and things to come.

Are you pursuing after the poor, transitory pleasures which flow from the intoxicating cup of dissipation, from the enslaving embraces of unhallowed gratification, from chambering and wantonness, from rioting and drunkenness? Behold, we shew you a more excellent way, more substantial joy, and more enduring happiness. We call you to communion with God; to the marriage-supper

supper of the Lamb; to union with the Father of your spirits; and to the assured hopes of an inheritance eternal in the heavens. With such union and hopes, how contemptible will all the pleasures of sin, which are but for a moment, appear! How readily will you own, that the time past is more than sufficient to have wrought the will of the flesh! and how fervently will you plead, that the very God of peace would sanctify you wholly, and would preserve you blameless to the coming of the Lord!

Aged men and aged women! come with us, and we will do you good. Long before this time you have learned, and often have you confessed, that all below is vanity of vanities; yet, alas! still have you sought your happiness in the increase of fortune or of fame. Now turn aside, and view this glorious sight exhibited by the gospel; an omnipotent God beseeching you to be reconciled to him; a merciful Redeemer inviting the weary and burdened to seek their rest in him, and tenderly assuring them, that he never rejects the supplications of the destitute; the Spirit of grace engaging to
take

take away the hard and stony heart, to make a willing people in the day of divine power, to bring you near to God as your exceeding joy, and to save you even at the eleventh hour. Contemplate these things, ye aged and infirm ! lay them seriously to heart, ere they be for ever hid from your eyes ; consider that now is the acceptable time, and the day of salvation ; remember that yet a little while, perhaps a very little while, and your day of mercy, your means of instruction, your season of grace, will be for ever ended. Awake, then, O sleeper ! arise from the dead ; call upon your God, while he may be found ; repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, and that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

Ye licentious lovers of carnal pleasure, who glory in your shame, and cannot cease from sin ! come with us, and we will do you good ; we will impart to you joys which wax not old ; which perish not in the use ; which can solace your souls in your departing moments ; which will not be embittered by reflection, and will prove sure pledges and foretastes of inexpressible pleasures, never to
have

have an end. Why do you regard earthly joys? why are you so eager after worldly treasures? why so conformed to the dissipated manners of a dissipated age? We set before you far nobler objects of pursuit; we call you to aspire after all that goodness through life, which God bestows as the immediate reward of his servants; after all the dignity of finishing your course with joy; after all the triumph of entering the celestial Zion with rejoicings, and all the unutterable transport of knowing, that in a short time the days of your mourning shall be for ever ended, and your ransomed spirit placed beyond the possibility of sorrow or temptation.

Ye lukewarm, cold-hearted, nominal, professing Christians! come with us, and we will do you good. Be it known unto you, that if you regard iniquity in your heart, our God will not hear you; if you draw back, he will have no pleasure in you; if other lords have dominion over you, your souls will be greatly troubled. But if you deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow Jesus, you will grow in grace, and will finish your course with joy; your peace will flow as a river, and your path will shine
brighter

brighter and brighter unto the perfect day ; if you are armed with the whole armour of God, you shall be conquerors, and more than conquerors, through the great Captain of salvation ; if you fight the good fight of faith, you will lay hold on eternal life, and will have an abundant entrance administered into the blessed mansions of your Father's house.

Come, then, with us, high and low, rich and poor, old and young ! we will do you good. Jesus has far better riches to impart than a thousand worlds can bestow : He saves to the uttermost ; he is proclaiming from his excellent glory, “ The Spirit and the Bride say, Come ; let him that is a-thirst come ; and whosoever will, let him come, and take of the waters of life freely.”

Ye who have complied with the endearing invitations of redeeming love ! come to the table of the Lord, with your hosannahs of praise to him who was dead, and is alive, and lives for evermore. At his sacred table, renew your cordial acceptance of his complete salvation ; renew your engagements to be the Lord's ; plead his never-failing promise of grace to help in

every time of need; and rejoice in the bright prospect of being for ever with the Lord.

Now, to him who sitteth on the throne, and maketh all things new; to him who loved you, and gave himself for you, to wash you from your sins in his own blood; to him who can keep you from falling, and can present you spotless before the throne, with exceeding great joy, be ascribed blessing and honour, dominion and glory in the highest, in all the churches, and through all ages, and world without end. Amen and amen.

SERMON

SERMON XXI.

ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

JOHN XX. 17.

Go unto my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God.

THESSE words spake Jesus, to comfort his feeble and depressed disciples, when they were grieved in their minds, and went forth weeping, bearing precious seed. He bids them dry up their tears, and leads them to confide in the Almighty Sovereign of heaven and earth, as their Father and their God. These animating words are strikingly expressive of the honour and dignity to which his disciples shall be advanced; and this honour have all the saints. It is not confin-

ed to the apostles and first followers of the Lord, but extends to every believer, in every age. Hence says the evangelist John, "As many as received Christ, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name *." To the same purpose speaks the inspired apostle, when writing to the Romans: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement †."

This is a part of the great salvation which belongs to all who sincerely seek Jesus, and who have taken shelter under the shadow of his wings. No sooner are dying mortals effectually awakened to a sincere conviction of their sinfulness, and of their perishing condition; no sooner are they turned from lying vanities, to seek their highest happiness in God, and are brought to a believing reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ, as their Redeemer

* John i. 12.

† Rom. viii. 14. and i. 11.

Redeemer and Sanctifier, than they are delivered from condemnation, and restored to the favour of an offended God.

This happy change of state is so unspeakably important, that though no greater benefits were promised to believers, yet their being both pardoned and accepted, demand their warmest gratitude, and their most constant admiration.

But this reconciliation with God is introductory to far higher honours, even in this world. In our text, the Saviour himself assures them, that this pardoning God is a Father to them, and beholds them with infinite complacency, as the children of his family. Your Father and your God! these are astonishing words, expressive of the noblest blessings.

As a Father, the everlasting Jehovah provides for his children on earth; so that they shall not want what is essential to their safety, their happiness, and their preparation for future glory. As a Father, he wisely corrects their follies, and mercifully chastens their faults; but after the necessary correction produces its intended amendment, he affectionately restores them to his paternal embrace.

embrace. As a Father, he teaches them to profit by the dispensations of his providence, and by the ordinances of his grace; he prepares them for the heavenly inheritance, which they will soon possess; he admits them to happy intercourse with himself in their secret retirements; he manages their concerns with unerring wisdom, encourages them to acknowledge him in all their ways, and proves their sure and all-sufficient help when human refuge fails.

How happy are the heaven-born men, who are made the children of God through faith in Christ, and are enjoying the instruction, the protection, the presence, and fellowship of this Almighty Father!

To give us a still higher idea of the happiness of the faithful, our text testifies, that he who pardons and accepts them, is not only a reconciled Father to them, but is also their God for ever and ever. Heaven alone can unfold the meaning of this expression. But in as far as it relates to his people's present circumstances, it implies the guidance of his wisdom, the guardianship of his power, the accomplishment of his promises, and the satisfying consolations of his love.

The

The source whence these distinguished honours flow, is intimated in these memorable words, “ My Father and your Father, my God and your God.”

As Mediator, fulfilling the divine will, and enjoying the divine manifestations, he calls Jehovah his Father and his God ; as Head over all his elect, he calls them his spiritual body, his members, and his brethren. The glory given to the Head, descends to his members ; so that they are joint heirs with Christ of that God, who, as a Father, loves them with unutterable regard ; and as their God, who honours them, and blesses them, and satisfies them from his inexhaustible fulness.

These are indeed marvellous discoveries, and evidently shew that the dignity of real Christians is great beyond all description. This is thy portion, O humble believer ! and this is thy purchase, O bleeding Saviour ! What shall we say to these things ? Is this thy manner with man, O God ? But it is Christ that died ; yea, rather, that is risen again, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father.

By dying, our glorious Redeemer obtain-
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ed those blessings, and secured them to all his brethren ; by rising from the dead, he declared himself the Son of God with power ; and by sitting down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, he made manifest his right to distribute the gifts which he had purchased at so great a price.

His ascension is therefore intimately connected with his death, and is the carrying into effect that complete redemption which he accomplished, when on the cross he said, “ It is finished.”

Therefore, the more we can enter by faith into the contemplation of the Saviour’s exalted state, we will be the better prepared for commemorating the greatness of his redeeming love. For though our Lord is not with us as to his bodily presence, yet he leaves with us the ordinance of the Supper, as an endearing memorial of our best Friend ; and calls upon us, by this solemn ordinance, to remember him with grateful adoration, to meditate on his mighty deeds, to admire his personal glory, and to trace the work of his mediation, from the deep abasement to which he submitted, to that exalted state which he now inherits.

In the hope of aiding your devotions, by suitable meditations on these animating subjects, it is proposed, through divine assistance, I. To attend to some of the circumstances of our Lord's ascension: II. To state to you, from the sacred volume, some of the important purposes for which Jesus, as Mediator, has ascended to the heavenly glory: and, III. To direct you to the practical improvement which professing Christians should make of this delightful subject.

I. With the history of Christ's ascension you are already well acquainted; and therefore, with respect to the time, the manner, the witnesses, and the circumstances connected with this subject, we shall not occupy your time with many observations.

In the fulness of time, and at the promised period, the Lord our Saviour descended from the excellent glory, and came to seek and save that which was lost. Having humbled himself to the death of the cross, as the Surety of sinners; having made reconciliation, and brought in an everlasting righteousness; having continued under the
power

power of death for a time, that he might combat and conquer the last enemy in his own dark dominions; on the morning of the first day of the week, he rose from the dreary mansions of the dead, and thus triumphed, in name of his people, over all the powers of death and the grave.

Being risen, he might have entered immediately on the full possession of the ineffable joy which awaited him above; might have immediately returned to the glory which he had with the Father before the world began; and might have ascended up on high, leading captivity captive.

But, in merciful condescension, he continued on earth forty days after his resurrection, to confirm his disciples in the faith; to instruct them in what was necessary for the future comfort of his church; and to prepare them for going forth as his ambassadors of peace among the nations.

When he had fully performed the whole work assigned him on earth, he then took possession of those joys, which awaited him in the heavens.

He leads out his disciples as far as to Bethany; he lifts up his sacred hands, and
blesses

blesse them; while blessing them, he is parted from them, and a cloud receives him out of their sight.

Let your faith penetrate the cloud, and follow the risen Saviour to the mansions of bliss.

The Lord has gone up with a shout; sing praises to our King; sing praises. He has led captivity captive, he has received gifts for such as had rebelled, that the Lord our God might dwell amongst them.

II. In contemplating the ascension of Christ, we may consider it, 1. As having a reference to himself, and to what he has done and suffered for sinners of mankind: 2. As having a reference to his church on earth, and to the world in general: 3. As of the utmost importance to you, and to every one who is saying with sincerity of heart, We desire to see Jesus.

1. With reference to himself, he ascended up on high, as the successful Captain of salvation, who, having conquered his own and his people's enemies, enters heaven in triumph, there to receive the honours so justly merited. Hence says the inspired

inspired

inspired apostle to the Hebrew converts, “Run with patience the Christian race; looking unto Jesus, 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 God *.” And again, in the same epistle, “We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, now crowned with glory and honour †.”

Fellow-worshippers, let us dwell for a moment on the meditation of our Redeemer’s present honours, as contrasted with the agonies he once endured. Think what a life of labour, of sorrow, and of suffering he led on earth, in his state of humiliation, from the moment he uttered the infant cry in the stable of Bethlehem, to that dark hour he expired on Calvary. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. The children of men rejected, reviled, and blasphemed him; Satan also dared to tempt the Son of God. Nay, for your sins and mine, the Father’s wrath was poured out upon him, the Father’s countenance was hid from him, and,

* Heb. xii. 1. 2.

† Heb. ii. 9.

and, amidst inconceivable agonies, he cried out, " My God ! my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ?"

But the suffering Saviour now rests from all his sorrows, and looks back upon them with infinite complacency. He who was wounded for our transgressions, now sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied. He who was scorned by multitudes of insulting sinners, is now adored by myriads of spotless spirits. He whose sacred head was pierced with thorns, is now crowned with celestial diadems of brightest glory. He who was once exposed to all the ignominy, and subjected to all the tortures of the cross, now sits enthroned in highest majesty. He who, as the Captain of salvation, fought and vanquished, now reigns above, as resistless conqueror over principalities and powers, over sin and hell, over death and the grave. He who led captivity captive, is now receiving the grateful adorations of his ransomed followers. The thousands whom he has washed, justified, and brought to glory, say with a loud voice, Thou art worthy to receive power, and riches, and dominion, and glory in the highest. The happy angels
before

before the throne, joyfully unite in praising and blessing him who was dead, and is alive, and lives for evermore. The many thousands of his assembled worshippers on earth, join their songs and services, their devotions and hosannahs, with the innumerable company above; and willingly acknowledge, with increasing gratitude and delight, that worthy is the Lamb who was slain; and that he redeems unto God by his blood, out of every kindred, language, and nation.

Let us mingle our hosannahs with their's; let us gladly ascribe all praise and honour to him who gave himself for us, and who now in heaven pleads our cause; let us confess him Lord, to the glory of the Father, and highly exalt him in our hearts above all that is called excellent; let us, with the happy inhabitants above, lay our crowns at the Redeemer's feet, and consecrate without reserve all our powers to his praise.

2. Jesus, our exalted Mediator, is ascended to act as universal Lord, and supreme Governor, in heaven and earth. Hence says the apostle, when writing to the Ephesian churches, " He is exalted far above all principalities and powers, and might and dominion,

dominion, and every name that is named ; and hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the church *.”

Here a most sublime subject of meditation presents itself to the mind, and suggests strong consolation to his faithful servants; namely, the righteous, sovereign, wide dominion of the ascended Saviour.

Angels are his willing subjects, and in his mediation they are deeply interested. It has confirmed their happiness beyond the possibility of failure. It has opened to them new scenes of contemplation and delight, and is the perpetual theme of their admiration and joy.

The fiends of darkness are under his subjection. He restrains their malice, and says to their fury, Go thus far, but no farther. He over-rules or overturns their stratagems; and advances his own glory by the very means which they employ against the interests of his kingdom. Know, then, for the comfort of the weak and timid, that when the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Lord will

will

* Ephes. i. 21. 22.

will lift up a standard against him. The accuser of the brethren shall be cast out, and the song of triumph shall resound before the throne of the Everlasting: "Now is come salvation, and the kingdom of our God and of his Christ, and the accuser of the brethren is cast out: Hallelujah, for the Lord reigneth."

In this world, the kingdom of the ascended Mediator is over the nations, over his church, and in the heart of every individual believer.

He is King of kings, and Lord of lords; all creatures and all events are in his hand, and under his controul. One he exalts, and another he lays low. He plants the nations, and he plucks them up again: He sends the direful pestilence, or gives the fruitful seasons: His eyes behold the nations: He rules by his power; even thy God, O Zion, he reigneth for ever and ever.

With respect to his church on earth, he watches over it continually; defends it by night and by day from innumerable enemies, open and secret; enlarges its boundaries; by the power of his word and Spirit;
gives

gives success to its ordinances, and raises up a seed to serve him in every generation.

Here then, O Zion, is thy stability and honour: Thou art founded on a rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail; thy King in the midst of thee is mighty, and has all power; and has appointed salvation for thy walls and bulwarks.

Again, his dominion is in the hearts of his people; in them is the kingdom of his grace; there he reigns as a mild but mighty Monarch, bringing salvation; subduing their enmity, ruling them by his righteous law, comforting them by his love, defending them from their spiritual enemies, invigorating them in their Christian warfare, and at last crowning them with victory and triumph, with glory, honour, and immortality.

Thus, our exalted Redeemer is King of saints, and Lord of Zion, and Governor among the nations; the sceptre of his kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness; and his dominion shall endure through all generations.

At the last great day, this Almighty Lord of Zion shall unfold the rectitude and wisdom of all his dispensations, from the
e e beginning

beginning to the end of the world. That important period hastens on ; of his second coming, he has given assurance to all men, by his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven. Hence said the heavenly angel to the sorrowful disciples of our Lord : “ Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing ? That same Jesus whom ye have seen go up to heaven, shall so come, in like manner, as ye have seen him go away * !” He shall come in the clouds of heaven, and with all his holy angels, in brightness and great glory, to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all who love his appearing.

Then shall the whole family of his redeemed unite together in joyful harmony : Behold he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him ! This is the King of glory, and the Lord of hosts ; strong in battle, and mighty to save : Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him ; and he is come, and will save us ; and we will be glad and rejoice in him. Amen.

SERMON

* Acts i. 10, 11.

SERMON XXII.

ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

JOHN XX. 17.

Go unto my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.

WE have endeavoured to aid your devotions, by craving your attention to the grand event of the ascension of Christ; and we have proposed to select from the sacred volume, some of the important purposes for which, as Mediator, he ascended into heaven.

Two of these purposes we have already illustrated. 1. The evidence of his triumph

over death and hell. 2. The entrance upon his Mediatorial glory as universal Lord. We now proceed to remark,

3. That Jesus, as Mediator, ascended to heaven, as the Representative and Head of all his people; that he might convey inestimable blessings to all his redeemed, and might order aright all the temporal and spiritual interests of his brethren on earth, until they are brought to the happy mansions of their Father's house. Therefore said he to his disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away *;" and again, "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, ye may be also †." One of his inspired apostles declares, that he is exalted a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance, and the remission of sins. Another, that he appears in the presence of God for us, and that he maketh continual intercession for his people. The royal psalmist proclaims the same animating truths in all the beauty of eastern imagery, and in all the rapture of inspired language: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou

* John xvi. 7.

† John xiv. 3.

thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. Blessed is the Lord, who daily loadeth us with his benefits, even the God of our salvation : He that is our God is the God of salvation, and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death *.”

Meditate on those gracious declarations, and compare them with the spiritual exercises of humble afflicted Christians, that you may perceive the suitableness, advantage, and consolation of this faithful saying, “ I ascend to my Father and your Father.”

The first exercise of awakened souls is, What shall we do to be saved ? who will deliver us from the wrath to come ? who can save us from going down to the pit ?

They are convinced of sin, by the illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit ; and see themselves chargeable with innumerable transgressions against the divine law ; they feel their heart so obdurate, that it remains unaffected by all the awful terrors of the divine threatenings, and unmelted by all the endearing

* Psal. lxxviii. 18, 19, 20.

endearing allurements of divine invitations. They know that they cannot redeem their own souls by all their services and sufferings; they relinquish all trust in their own feeble endeavours; and, looking to the God of all grace, they cry out in sincerity of heart, Lord save, or we perish; turn us, and we shall be turned; draw us, and we will run after thee; quicken us, and we will call upon the Lord; bring our souls from prison, and we will praise thy name.

What says the gospel to such trembling, awakened sinners? How readest thou? "The God of our fathers has raised up Jesus, and exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour; to give repentance, and remission of sin*."

This important saying, when brought home by the Spirit, proves as the balm of Gilead to the wounded conscience. It is repentance we need, to see our sinfulness more clearly, to grieve for our sins in heart and conduct, to hate and renounce these sins: It is pardon and remission we need, that we may tell the daughters of Zion, though the Lord was angry with us, his anger

* Acts v. 31.

ger is turned away ; he hath forgiven much, and we will love much. It is a Saviour we want, to redeem our souls from destruction ; and a Prince and King, to subdue our most inveterate corruptions. Here is every thing we need ; Jesus is risen from the dead, and exalted to be Lord and King, a Prince and Saviour. He gives repentance and remission of sin, every spiritual grace and comfort. He is both able and willing to save us to the very uttermost. Why art thou then cast down, O our souls? still trust, and hope, and wait patiently for the God of your salvation.

When repentance and remission are obtained, and when peace is imparted, through the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, then humble Christians fondly hope, that they will go on their way rejoicing, and will press forward with undismayed alacrity. But they soon find their path beset by painful obstacles ; they soon encounter unexpected temptations ; and daily experience convinces them, that they need much more than human wisdom to guide their steps, and much more than human power to uphold them in their pilgrimage.

For

For the encouragement of such, this is the testimony of scripture concerning the ascended Redeemer : “ Seeing we have a great High-Priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession : For we have not an High-Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are : Let us therefore come boldly to a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*.”

What unspeakable relief and consolation should these sayings impart to you, who feel the pressure of many distressing fears ! If you have fled for refuge to the hope set before you in the gospel, that merciful Redeemer on whom your trust is placed, lives evermore ; he is touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and condescendingly testifies, that in all your afflictions he is afflicted ; he can succour you when tempted, or can cause even temptations and trials to work together for your good ; he can make a way to escape, or can perfect whatever concerneth you. Why then dost thou doubt,

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* Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16.

O thou of little faith ! be no longer faithless, but believing.

So long as we are on earth, our wants and weaknesses, our duties and difficulties, will suggest the necessity of applying daily to a throne of grace, for new supplies of spiritual communications : But, alas ! what sincere Christian has not felt the difficulty of ordering his cause before the Lord, of continuing instant in prayer, of wrestling in supplication, as Jacob did, saying unto Jehovah, “ I cannot let thee go, unless thou bless me ! ” Yes, pious Christian, you have often experienced the difficulty of attaining to such sincerity in prayer ; this moment you feel the difficulty of asking in faith, of staying the wanderings of your mind, and of keeping the carnal heart from distrusting the living and true God ! Hence it is that even the righteous themselves too often suspect that their prayers will not be regarded, and that the God of Israel will not grant the petitions they have asked of him.

Under this spiritual burden, how reviving is the thought, that we have an Advocate with the Father, Christ Jesus the righteous ; and that at this solemn moment he is interceding

ceding in the presence of God for us! He has gone, as the great High-Priest, into the holy of holies, with the names of all his Israel engraven on his heart. He is acquainted with all their trials and dangers, their sins, sorrows, and fears, all the perplexities in which they are involved, and all the devices of their artful foes. He appears in their behalf before his Father's throne; he orders aright their cause; he presents their feeble supplications, perfumed with the incense of his own infinite merit; he vindicates them from the charge of their unrelenting accusers, and employs his never-failing influence for their salvation. When their mouths are shut through self-condemnation; when, through darkness and ignorance, they know not in what manner to present their petitions; when their sighs are many, and their heart is faint; then his language is: "Satan is seeking to winnow them as wheat; I pray for them, for they are mine; let not their faith fail. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me: Take them not now out of the world, but keep them from its evil.

His

His intercession has power with God, and prevails: it cannot fail of success; for he pleads on the footing of what he himself has done, on what the Father himself has promised, and on what the Mediator is exalted to bestow.

Be not discouraged, ye feeble, tempted, trembling mortals: "I ascend," says the merciful High-Priest, "as your Advocate with God; and through my intercession, he will comfort you with parental love, and will enrich you with all the liberality of the God of all grace."

Lastly, We remark, that the ascension of the Saviour is of unspeakable importance to genuine believers in Christ; because he has gone to prepare their future mansions in his Father's house.

"I go to prepare a place for you," said the faithful and true Witness; "if it were not so, I would have told you*." Here the Christian's expectation of immortal glory rests on a solid immoveable foundation; on the promise, and love, and faithfulness of their crucified

* John xiv. 2.

cified and exalted Redeemer; he has passed into the heavens as the first-fruits of those who are united to him; and as the first-born, or first ascended of his brethren; to take possession in their name; to prepare their incorruptible inheritance; and to prepare them for it, by all the dispensations of Providence, and all the ordinances of religion. When he has prepared them, and has finished his work with them on earth, he will send for them, and will bring them to himself, that where he is, they may be also; "I go away," says he, "but ye shall see me again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy shall no man take from you." Thus death is deprived of his sting to believers; the grave is not to them a dreary prison, but a bed of repose. To depart is far better than to abide in this earthly tabernacle; and to die is unspeakable gain; it is to be with Christ, to see him as he is, to be like him, to be satisfied with his likeness, and to be forever with the Lord: Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.

III. I am to improve this subject.

1. What

1. What has been said, may aid your self-examination at this solemn season, and may enable you to judge concerning yourselves, whether you are invited to this holy table by the Master of the feast; or debarred from it by your sins.

They who are indeed the brethren of Christ, or, in other words, they who through faith have taken the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as their trust and portion, are warranted and invited to show forth their Redeemer's death in the ordinance of the supper.

Judge, then, your own selves, and impartially inquire if you are brethren of Christ, in spiritual connection with him; and joined to the Lord in an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten. Once you were enemies to Christ, and children of wrath even as others; you knew not the Saviour, nor loved him, nor believed in his name. Is it otherwise now? Has the gracious Almighty Shepherd of Israel mercifully brought you to his fold, to feed in his green pastures? Has he exalted you to the fellowship of grace? Has he separated you, in your sentiments,

timents, tempers, and pursuits, from a world lying in wickedness, and happily determined you to account all things in this world as vanity, when compared with the excellence of the knowledge of Christ? Thus it was with those chosen disciples, to whom the message mentioned in our text was sent: Jesus was precious to them, as Peter, one of their number, emphatically testifies *; and though they saw him not, they believed in him; and believing, loved him supremely; and rejoiced in him with joy unspeakable, and full of glory †.

Say then, brethren, is Christ precious to you? and do you feel an ardent desire, that he may be daily more and more precious? Do you know and admire him as the beloved of the Father, the joy of angels, and the trust of all the saints? Do you know and admire him as descending from the excellent glory, to seek that which was lost, to die for the unjust, to save the chief of sinners, and to bring many sons to glory? Do you know and admire him as ascending up on high, to lead captivity captive, to obtain

* 1 Pet. ii. 7.

† 1 Pet. i. 8.

tain gifts for men, to make intercession, and to receive all honour, worship, and homage?

Do you submit to his mediatory characters, saying with sincerity of heart, This is the great "Prophet" of my Christian profession, who reveals to me by his word and Spirit, those important truths which enlighten my benighted mind; which revive my fainting soul, and which comfort my troubled conscience. This is the "great High-Priest" of my profession, who atoned for my guilt, who pardons my manifold transgressions, and who enriches me with all spiritual blessings from heavenly places. This is the Almighty "King," strong in battle, and mighty to save, whose yoke is easy, and whom I determine willingly to obey.

Say, intending communicants, are you brethren of Christ? Have you received this offered Redeemer for righteousness, sanctification, and strength? have you come to him as weary? and have you believed with the heart unto salvation? Burdened with a sense of sin, bewailing your unworthiness, destitute of all confidence in the flesh, have you sought redemption through the blood of Christ, and
unfeignedly

unfeignedly relied on him for mercy to pardon, for grace to renew, and for his Spirit to uphold?

Though your faith may not rise to all the joyful persuasion of your own personal interest in the merits of the Redeemer, or to the clear evidence that he gave himself for you; yet do you see yourselves undone without his great salvation? Do you, though with a wavering faith and trembling heart, strive to embrace his invitations? Do you acknowledge, that you can have redemption through his blood alone? And are you saying with sincerity, Save, Lord, or we perish; make haste to help, for other refuge we have none.

Do you come to him for strength as well as righteousness, for holiness as well as comfort, for victory over temptation and sin now, no less than over the sting and terrors of death at last? When your hearts are enlarged and comforted, do ye ascribe to him the unrivalled praise of all your progress in grace, and all your prospects of glory?

If it is thus with you in any measure, fear not, nor be dismayed, though, like the first disciples of our Lord, you are encompassed
with

with much weakness and ignorance. He called them brethren, and by the same endearing appellation he now addresses you; he invites you to come to him as your best friend, with all your fears and afflictions. He invites you to keep this gospel-feast with gladness of heart; and to hope, that by attending on his ordinances, your faith will be increased, your patience, self-denial, and humility, will be strengthened and increased.

2. You may consider our text, as a reasonable and gracious message sent to all the true disciples of Christ; to those amongst you who desire to love the Saviour more than all, and to hold fellowship with him in the ordinance of the Supper. If you are sincerely seeking Jesus who was crucified, and earnestly praying, that the God of all grace would work in you the whole of his good pleasure, and the work of faith with power; to you our text is a message of love from the Lord Jesus Christ, an endearing invitation to go to his table, and a gracious promise, that he will bestow with all the bounty of a Father, and all the kindness of a God.

Go, saith Jesus, tell my brethren, tell those

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of them who, like John, do love me with most ardent affection; those of them who, like Thomas, are still exceedingly weak in faith, and unwilling to believe; and those of them who, like Peter, are weeping bitterly for having dishonoured me; tell them, that I ascend as their faithful High-Priest; that I leave with them the memorials of my broken body and shed blood; that I invite them to keep the gospel-feast with holy joy; because he who is their Father and their God, through my mediation, will bless them with all spiritual blessings from heavenly places.

Go tell my disciples, afflicted with many outward adversities, feeble in body, anxious about their future provision, deserted by their friends, and reproached by their enemies: Tell them that I ascend, and live for evermore; that I am the Lord their Shepherd, and therefore they shall not want; that I will feed them with food convenient for them, and will soon bring them to their home, their Father's house above, where there is bread enough and to spare, and where the days of their mourning shall be for ever ended: Invite them to my sanctuary, and
to

to my table ; for there will I meet with them, and will commune with them of all that is in their heart.

Go tell my depressed, sorrowful, and doubting disciples, who are harassed with many temptations, filled with alarming suggestions, giving up all for lost, and writing most bitter things against themselves ; tell them I am ascended, and live for evermore ; I have received gifts for rebellious men ; and will fill them with the spirit of life and peace, to bring them to the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

Invite them to my sanctuary and to my table ; for there will I meet with them, and commune with them of all that is in their heart.

Go to the tender lambs of the flock, feeble, young, and inexperienced, who are ready to be discouraged at the length of the way, the duties they have to perform, the snares they have to encounter, and the trials they expect : Tell them I am ascended, and live for evermore ; that I will give them grace to help in every time of need, will order their lot aright, and will not leave them until I have done all

that I have promised : Invite them to come with my brethren, to my sanctuary and my table ; for there will I meet with them, and will commune with them of all that is in their heart.

Go to my weary, fainting, aged disciples, who have borne the heat and burden of the day, and who are soon to finish their pilgrimage, and to bid adieu to all mortal things : Tell them that I am ascended, and live for evermore ; that because I live, they shall live also ; that as I have been with them in six troubles, I will not forsake them in the seventh, in their last and sorest conflict ; that I will soon put into their hands their discharge from the warfare ; and will enable them to leave the world with all the dignity and calmness of dying Stephen, who in his last moments testified to surrounding friends and enemies, that he saw heaven opened, and the Son of man standing to receive his departing spirit.

Under such impressions, hopes, and desires, let us seek Jesus, that he may manifest himself to us as he has not done unto the world ; and that we may commune with him of all that is in our heart.

If,

If, at the table of the Lord, you are filled with peace in believing ; if you are released from your spiritual bondage ; and if your fellowship with him is promoted, you will be saying in the fulness of your gratitude, What shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits ? and how shall we adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things ?

3. Our text furnishes instruction to all who are grateful for the Saviour's abundant grace.

The message which has now been illustrated for your consolation, serves also to convey important instruction in the path of Christian duty, in three important respects.

1st, When the Saviour styles you his brethren, he thereby intimates the connection which ought to subsist among his disciples. You are brethren together, children of the same Father, travellers to the same heavenly country, partakers of one faith, one baptism, and one hope of your calling : therefore your duty is to love as brethren, and to live as brethren, maintaining the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Keep it in your mind always, that you have not only the same Saviour, in whom
you

you may confide, but the same enemies to encounter : and nothing would give them more pleasure, than to see you alienated from each other by reproaches, hatred, and strife ; having bitter envying and railings among yourselves, hateful and hating one another : Give them not this satisfaction ; but let the world know, let sinners know, let Satan know, that you are the genuine disciples of Jesus, by being meek and lowly ; by loving one another with pure hearts fervently, by continuing stedfast in Christian fellowship, and by living in love one towards another.

Keep it in mind always, that the prosperity of the spiritual kingdom of Christ does not depend on the success of a party, or on the strengthening of any particular denomination of professing Christians ; that it consists not in meats or drinks, or outward forms, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy of the Holy Ghost ; in meekness, patience, circumspection, and holiness ; in loving the Saviour with supreme affection ; in doing good to the household of faith, and doing the will of God with ready mind.

Let your striving be for excellence in heavenly

venly graces, and let it be your highest ambition to be zealous of good works, to love the saints, and to comfort one another.

2d, When the Redeemer says, I ascend to my Father and your Father, he informs you, that you are the children of God, not only by creation and providence, and by ten thousand mercies, but by the powerful, endearing ties of redemption, of regenerating grace, and adopting love.

As children, your duty is twofold, obedience and submission: See that, as obedient children, you fashion yourselves, not after the flesh, but according to the will of God. Here, Christian brethren, I exhort you by all the regard you bear to the honour of religion, to the praise of the Saviour's name, to the comfort of your own souls, and to the edification of your brethren in Christ; I beseech you to strive after an unreserved obedience to every commandment in the sacred volume, and a consistent Christian conduct at all times, in all places, and in every situation of life: Beware of a time-serving religion; of conformity to an evil world; of attempting to obey both Christ and Belial; both

both the desires of the flesh and the commandments of God.

Depart from evil, and from the appearance of it. Do good, and pursue it; let the world see, that the cross of Christ is all your glory; that to you his yoke is easy, and his burden light; that his precepts are the songs of your pilgrimage; and that your whole tempers, words, and actions, are regulated by his holy and righteous laws. As children, learn willing submission to your heavenly Father's disposals, even in the darkest dispensations of providence; think honourably of God, and own that he is just in all his ways, and holy in all his works; give him the reverence of children, even when he corrects; believe that God is love, both in prosperity and affliction. In your trials and sore adversities, let your humble language be, It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good in his sight; not my will, but thine be done, O my Father who art in heaven.

3d, Having the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, not only as your reconciled Father, but as your God by his perpetual covenant, it becomes your duty and privilege

privilege to trust in his sufficiency at all times, and to glorify him in your several situations of life.

Trust in the Lord Jehovah, with whom is everlasting strength, when walking in darkness, and when going on your way rejoicing; in seasons of plenty or of poverty, in days of health or sickness, through life and death, place your believing, unlimited reliance on his all-sufficiency and unchangeableness: Trust in his wisdom to direct, in his power to sustain, in his inexhaustible fulness to supply, and in his faithfulness to shield and guard: Finally, trust him with all your own personal concerns, whether temporal, spiritual, or everlasting; trust him for the welfare of your family and kindred, for the preservation and prosperity of the church of Christ, and for the seasonable and certain fulfilment of all the boundless, delightful promises of his well-ordered covenant. As the chosen people of this God of Israel, live to the honour of his name in the stations and relations which in his holy sovereignty he is pleased to allot you in the world.

If rich, be ready to distribute to the necessities

cessities of all men, especially to those of the household of faith; if learned, be clothed with humility; if possessing influence, exert it in exalting the righteous; if successful in business, render unto God the unrivalled honour; if happy in your friends and connections, still love the Saviour with supreme regard: If parents, teach your children from their early years, what the scriptures reveal and require, what unspeakable peace there is in carefully keeping the divine commandments, and what it is to sanctify the Sabbath; to delight in prayer, and to worship God in the devotions of the closet, the sanctuary, and the family: If you are servants, let the word of God be your constant guide, and chief companion; fulfil the duties of your situation, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but with honesty, integrity, and singleness of heart, as unto the Lord, who is your Master in heaven; and with watchful circumspection, guard against bringing any dishonour upon your religious profession by dishonesty, injustice, falsehood, selfishness, arrogance, discord, or murmuring.

If you are young in years and experience, rejoice, that through grace you have been
inclined

inclined and enabled to come to God through Christ Jesus, and to take him for your God and portion in the land of the living: Having so done, walk humbly with God, and cleave close to him with full purpose of heart; give yourselves to prayer; grow in acquaintance with his word; beware of the many snares arising from your constitutional dispositions; live for God in this evil world; and ever remember, that he hath in no small measure connected the honour of his religion with the propriety of your conduct; if you serve him as you ought, and are walking in his commandments and ordinances blameless, you set before others a living example of what is the genuine tendency of evangelical doctrine; but if you are not maintaining a conversation becoming the gospel, you betray the cause of Christ, you harden the wicked, you make the way of truth to be evil spoken of. Be not, I intreat you, so treacherous to your Saviour and God; call not Jesus Master and Lord, that you may have the better opportunity of injuring his interests; embrace not his gospel, that you may more successfully mar its progress; profess not zeal for Christianity, that you

you may more effectually wound it in the house of its friends : The cause of our God is sufficiently dishonoured by the ungodly, the impenitent, and the unbelieving ; let it not be betrayed and scandalized, by those who experience good hope and strong consolation from the gospel of peace. Live for God in this present evil world ; live near him in happy intercourse ; live dependent on his mercy, for grace to help in every time of need ; and long for the happy period, when grace shall be perfected in glory, and faith swallowed up in immediate vision, and hope exchanged for everlasting uninterrupted enjoyment.

Now, unto him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you blameless before the throne with exceeding great joy, be blessing, and honour, and glory. Amen.

SERMON XXIII.

CHRIST'S UNCHANGEABLENESS*.

HEBREWS xiii. 7, 8.

Remember them which have the rule over you, who 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.

THE longer we continue on earth, we become more and more convinced that every thing is uncertain and unsatisfying, fleeting and short-lived. The sun rises but to set; and the flowers blossom but to fade,
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* This Sermon and the next, were preached in Lady Yester's Church, on the 9th of March 1806, after the death of the Rev. David Black, Minister of that church.

the fashion of the world passes away, and the world itself is hastening to dissolution. Past ages are to us as if they had never been. One generation goeth away, and another cometh: "Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" Look around through the kingdoms of the earth, and you behold the cruel ravages of war, and desolating calamities consuming the nations: In the church of Christ, you behold the faithful failing; the love of many waxing cold; Zion smitten with breach upon breach; and Zion's interest marred, by the opposition of foes, and the indiscretion of friends: In the circles of domestic life, in the habitations of high and low, you behold some, like Rachel, weeping for their children because they are not; some, like Job, lamenting that wearisome nights of pain are appointed them; and others, like David, testifying, "My foes hate me with cruel hatred; thy hand, O Lord, presseth sore upon me. In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved; thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled."

Amidst these sorrows and changes, is there no chamber of rest to which the weary may retire?

retire? is there no hiding-place from the storm, no covert from the tempest, no brother born for adversity, no friend that sticketh closer than a brother?

Blessed be the God of our salvation, this passage, from which I propose to discourse, sets before us a city of refuge, whose gates stand continually open; and shews us where we may find strong consolation when tossed by raging billows, and when contemplating no help in man. It calls our attention from this changing and chequered scene, to the immutability of the Saviour. It carries our thoughts from the weakness and mortality of our dearest friends on earth, to that ever-living God, who, without the aid of the creature, is his people's all-sufficient portion; and it suggests to mourners in Zion, the noblest support under the loss of faithful and beloved pastors, by reminding them, that the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the object of their pastor's faith, and whose glory was the end and aim of his conversation, still lives and reigns as the Lord Almighty, and loves his people with an everlasting love: He has all power in heaven and earth, and is Head over all things for the benefit of his church.

church. All his servants are in his hands ; and his cause dies not when his servants die. His spiritual kingdom shall prosper in the world, shall prevail from age to age, and shall extend its triumphs through all nations ; for Christ Jesus, and the cause of Christ, and the religion of Christ, are the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Your excellent pastor has been taken from you in the midst of his years, and labours, and usefulness ; and you sincerely lament the loss of so faithful a labourer in the vineyard of the Lord ; and in this mournful and mysterious event you forebode great injury to the interests of religion.

For sustaining and tranquillizing your mind and my own, under the anguish of so severe and unexpected a stroke ; let us turn our attention to that unchanging Friend, who has said to his saints and servants, **Lo, I am with you always !** and who has been faithful to his word of promise through every age of his church.

In illustrating this subject, let me, **I. Recommend** to your serious attention, the transcendent excellencies of the Master whom we serve ; by shewing in what respects
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Christ Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. II. I shall recommend to your imitation, the faith and conversation of him who has spoken to you the word of God, but who now rests from his labours, and is entered into the joy of his Lord.

I. Jesus Christ is immutable in the glory of his person, and attributes of his divine nature. Hence says the text, with peculiar emphasis of language, "Christ Jesus the same." The same language cannot be applied to Abraham, nor any of the patriarchs; not to Moses, nor any of the prophets; not to Paul, nor any of the apostles. All their powers were finite and limited, and all their attainments dependent and derived: Thus also it is with angels; and archangels, with cherubim and seraphim. But the expressions here, carry forward our contemplations, from the derived perfections of holy men, and heavenly angels, to the underived, independent, unchangeable excellencies of him whose divine glory is without variableness, or shadow of turning: His superiority is above all created beings, and contains a satisfying proof of his supreme Godhead; for sure it requires not

the aid of reasoning to evince, that unchangeableness and eternity are essential, distinguishing attributes of Deity; and since both these attributes are ascribed to our Redeemer, the inference is plain, that he on whom our hopes rely, is equal with the Father, and the brightness of his glory; inheriting in himself, from everlasting to everlasting, unerring wisdom, omnipotent power, and undeviating faithfulness, and all the fulness of the Godhead.

If arguments were necessary to prove what the text asserts, we might remind you, how frequently this unerring word of inspiration ascribes to Jesus all the distinguishing names, perfections, works, and glory of the Deity; how plainly he is declared in scripture, to be the true God and eternal life; the great God our Saviour, over all, blessed for ever, the first and last, which was, and is, and is to come.

Even when he clothed his Godhead in a veil of flesh, and dwelt with man on earth; under all the singular circumstances of his seeming meanness, the glories of his divinity shone forth with brightest splendour. As God, he raised the dead by the word of his
power;

power ; relieved the wretched, pardoned the guilty, saved the perishing : As God, he calmed the stormy sea, triumphed over Satan, fed thousands by the slenderest means, restored Lazarus, and raised from death the widow of Nain's son. It was therefore no robbery, no assumption of undue honour, when he made himself equal with God, and plainly declared, I and the Father are one. No wonder, then, that heaven and earth united to do him honour at his birth ; that celestial angels left their native skies to proclaim him as Christ the Lord ; that the star in the east conducted the wise men to the humble mansion of the incarnate Jehovah ; that the shepherds of Bethlehem, the aged Simeon, the pious Anna, and the saints waiting for redemption in Jerusalem, did sing in rapturous strains the Deity of the child Jesus, and the wondrous things he should accomplish.

But it must afford peculiar consolation to the mind of the serious, when they reflect, that this description of their Redeemer is here introduced, not merely as a testimony of his supreme Godhead, but as a pledge to his people, that all his divine perfections are

unchangeably engaged for their benefit, and will be manifested in promoting their salvation and happiness ; that he will guide them by his wisdom, and guard them by his power ; that his faithfulness will be their shield and buckler, his love their consolation in their darkest hours, and his presence their refuge and safety amidst surrounding dangers.

Consider then, O Christian, the transcendent glories of your unchangeable Redeemer, that thus you may never weary in his service, nor distrust his promises, nor be ashamed to glory in his cross, nor afraid to maintain his cause.

2. The immutability of Christ Jesus, refers to his mediation as the only Redeemer of our apostate race. In this respect, he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever : He loved his people from everlasting, and will love them to the end.

From the period of his faithful engagements with the everlasting Father, when he graciously undertook to present the myriads of his redeemed, without spot or blemish, before his throne, he has been carrying forward one uniform, harmonious, amazing scheme

scheme of mercy and salvation. For this purpose, he sustains the important and dignified character of his people's Saviour and Lord, fulfils with perpetual honour and efficacy, the condescending offices of Prophet, and Priest, and King; and promotes the glory of God, by imparting mercy and redemption to guilty, perishing sinners.

How full of wonder and grace is the method of our reconciliation! God manifested in the flesh, dying the just for the unjust, and bearing our iniquities in his own body on the tree: Yes, my brethren, a bleeding Saviour, an atoning sacrifice, a crucified Jesus, are the grounds of our hope, and the sure foundation of our pardon and peace; and not of ours only, but of all who are now inheriting the mansions above, and of all who ever shall arrive at these glorious abodes.

For it is ever to be kept in remembrance, that the method of reconciliation and redemption, is the same from the beginning of time to the end of ages. The merits of the Saviour's sufferings reached back to the first generation of mankind, for he was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and their

their merits and influence shall extend to the end of days ; for his name shall endure for ever, it shall last as long as the sun ; and men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed.

What he endured on the cross, more than eighteen hundred years ago, are the stripes by which we in these latter days are healed ; his leaving the glory of the Father, to become a man of sorrows, is the proof, that there never can be any other name given, by which any can be saved, than the name of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ; and his commanding his people to shew forth his death until he come again, is a security, that till that period, he will preserve his church and ordinances, and will have a seed to serve him while sun and moon endure.

From the giving of the first promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, from that period, Old-Testament saints looked forward to the day of Christ, made mention of his righteousness, and longed for his salvation ; they saw him in the daily sacrifice, in the paschal lamb, in the altar, the incense, and the
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mercy-seat ; they pleaded, in the language of genuine faith, See, O God, our shield ! look on the face of thine Anointed ; and they triumphed in him as the Lord their righteousness, who clothed them with the garments of salvation.

Those who believed in Christ, his first disciples, celebrate his praises in nobler and loftier strains of evangelical devotion : We know in whom we have believed, and are persuaded he will keep what we have committed to him ; we count all things but loss, for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ ; whom having not seen, we love ; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. His disciples now confess, that we are redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but by the precious blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. With humble gratitude we testify, that Jesus is unutterably precious to our souls ; that he is our unerring Prophet, who reveals to us by his word and Spirit, these sublime truths which enlighten our benighted minds ; that he is our merciful High-Priest, who pleads our cause, and
blesses

blesses us with all spiritual blessings; and that he is our Almighty King, whose laws we delight to obey; and by whose grace we will be enabled to overcome temptations and corruptions, death and hell.

When we and our fellow-travellers have finished our course, and are sleeping in the dust, succeeding generations shall arise while time revolves, to glory in the cross of Christ, to own the merits of his mediation, and to publish the praises of his grace.

When time shall be no more, when the earth shall be dissolved, and when all the redeemed have come to Zion, then shall the universal song of praise resound with ever new and increasing rapture, to him who loved them, and gave himself for them, who washed them from their sins in his own blood; who brought them out of great tribulation, and hath given them a crown of glory, which fadeth not away.

Thus Jesus, as Mediator, is all in all to his people; he was so through ages past, and he will be so through the boundless ages of a blessed eternity; for Christ Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

3. Christ Jesus is invariably the same, in
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the truth he reveals to his church, in the nature of his religion, and in its tendency to promote the glory of God, and the happiness of mankind.

From the creation to the present time, he has been the light of the world ; all the heavenly wisdom which ever illuminated any immortal mind, has descended from this glorious Sun of righteousness ; and his path has been as the light, shining brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Long before he dwelt with man upon the earth, his church was planted, and his salvation foretold. In the ages before the flood, he had a seed to serve him. Hence we find Enoch, and Seth, and Noah, walking with God in the path of obedience and fellowship ; standing forth as the patterns and preachers of righteousness, and foretelling to their families and the world, the coming of the Lord.

After the flood, when mankind were multiplied, and had increased in ignorance, idolatry, and crimes, as they increased in numbers, Abraham, the father of the faithful, was raised up to restore and transmit the knowledge of the true religion ; to teach mankind the wor-
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ship of God, and to confirm the hopes of that promised Messiah, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed.

In the history of the descendants of this venerable patriarch, you mark the preservation of the true religion, against all the influence of natural depravity, deep-rooted prejudices, mournful apostacy, and fierce opposition.

When the fulness of the time arrived, the Son of God descended from the excellent glory, to be the light of the Gentiles, and the salvation of his people Israel; to gather the redeemed of the Lord, and to unfold those mysteries of godliness, which have been transmitted to us by his inspired apostles; and which, in connection with the Old-Testament writings, form a complete revelation of the divine will, and a perfect rule of principles and conduct.

The scriptures are most beautifully harmonious in all their parts. Though written in very distant ages, by men whose tempers, employments, and habits widely differed; who could act from no principle of collusion, and who treat of subjects where mankind are most apt to differ; yet we find them uniting in the same testimony, gradually

dually unfolding one glorious scheme of redemption, and confirming or explaining what had before been more obscurely mentioned; but never inserting one sentiment, or doctrine, or precept, contradictory to what the other sacred penmen before and after them have declared.

This undeviating harmony of the scriptures, not only affords us satisfying evidence of their inspiration; but, as they uniformly testify of Christ, and acknowledge him for their author, and are justly styled the word of Christ, their perfect consistency may therefore serve as a comment on our text, and may establish our mind in the persuasion, that his religion is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

From the beginning of the world to the present time, you perceive a similarity in the sentiments and pursuits of saints; which evidently shews that they have all drank into one spirit, and have been all instructed by the same Wonderful Counsellor; and that though their external forms of religious worship have greatly varied, according to the appointments of divine wisdom, and the circumstances

cumstances of mankind, yet their religion has been substantially the same, under all the variety of observances, in the patriarchal, prophetic, and apostolic dispensations.

The faith, submission, and obedience of Abraham, the devotion of Jacob, the meekness of Moses, the patience of Job, the piety of David, and the holy fortitude of Daniel, are to this day patterns for our imitation and attainments, after which we ought through grace to aspire.

In attending to the character of the saints mentioned in scripture, you may perceive a wonderful and instructive similarity in their reverence for God, and eagerness to know his will; their self-abasement and humility of soul, their delight in the intimations of pardoning mercy, their prayers for the divine presence, their endeavours after conformity to the divine precepts, and their gratitude for the promises of future rest.

Nor are those evidences of a religious character confined to the saints in scripture; all in the present age, who have received Christ Jesus the Lord, as their Saviour and sanctifier, do, according to their measure, resemble those, whose names are recorded with
honour

honour in this sacred volume ; and do with greater or less progress walk in the steps of those, who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises.

Our text accounts for this similarity of character in all the children of God ; Christ Jesus was, and is, and ever will be, the unerring Prophet of his church, and the true light which enlightens every man who cometh into the spiritual world. As he is of one mind, and perfect, and without variableness, therefore his religion, in its nature, tendency, and fruits, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Following out the sentiments we have advanced on this part of the subject, we remark, that the great Shepherd of Israel conducts his followers to the rest prepared for them, in the same manner now, as in all former ages. What he did for Abraham, Jacob, David, and Job, when they were tried, tempted, and sorrowful, he still does for his people when placed in similar circumstances. It is this which renders the history of the illustrious men mentioned in scripture so profitable at all times. In the history of their lives, we learn what are the endearing characters,

acters, which an unchanging God graciously displays for the consolation of all who trust in him aright ; and what are the manifestations of divine interposition which they are permitted to plead and expect, amidst the toils of their warfare and pilgrimage. This might be illustrated by a review of the trying situations in which the servants of God in former ages have been placed, and the divine consolations and deliverances they have experienced ; but this would lead us into a very ample field of discourse, upon which we cannot at present attempt to enter.

Search the scriptures for information on this subject ; and in your perusal of the sacred volume, keep in view the immutability which the text ascribes to Israel's leader ; thence infer, for your encouragement in the path of righteousness, that no scripture is of any private interpretation ; and that the promises made unto the saints of old, with all the promises of the well-ordered covenant, are yea and amen in Christ, are the sure portion of every believer in Jesus, and will be accomplished in the happy experience of all who have, through faith, fled for refuge to the hope set before them.

Before

Before we conclude our meditations on the immutability of Christ Jesus, it seems not foreign to the subject, to remark the safety and perpetuity of the Christian church, amidst all the ravages of time, and revolutions of the nations.

He who has planted his church on earth, ever lives to defend it, and extend its progress. Die who will, the Lord lives; and on this rock his church is built, so that the gates of hell can never prevail against it. "Trust not in man," saith the royal Psalmist, "put not your trust in princes, nor in the sons of men, in whom there is no help; their breath goeth forth, they return to the earth, and in that very day their thoughts perish: But the Lord shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion! unto all generations *." To the same purpose are those remarkable words, in the first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God! is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." He whom the text celebrates, has established on earth a spiritual and peace-
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* Psal. cxlvi. 3, 4, 10.

ful kingdom, essentially different from the empires of the world; not governed by worldly maxims, but by laws holy, just, and good; not supported by worldly power, but by the special care of the Lord God omnipotent who reigneth; not extending its triumphs by violence and war, but by the resistless energy of the truth, and the victorious power of the gospel.

This spiritual kingdom of Christ shall spread among the nations, nay, it shall prosper and prevail, by the very stratagems employed to mar its progress. These commotions among the kingdoms of men, which astonish and alarm the wisest politicians, are hastening forward that happy period, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in; when all Israel shall be saved, when all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. Already is the pride of Antichrist laid low, his delusions are detected, his policy reviled, and this wide dominion daily diminishing. Already the King of Zion arises to plead his own cause; he girds his sword upon his thigh, and shall ere long take to himself his great power, and reign.

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Be comforted then, my Christian brethren: You have lost a faithful, eminent pastor; but Jesus lives and reigns, as Head over all things for his church: He will arise and plead his own cause, will have mercy on his Zion, and the time to favour her shall ere long arrive; he will clothe his priests with salvation, and make his people shout aloud for joy; he will guard his church by night and by day, will enlarge the boundaries of his kingdom, will perpetuate the ordinances of his gospel through all succeeding ages, and will have a seed to serve him while sun and moon endure. “All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations *.” Amen.

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* Psal. cxlv. 10.—14.

SERMON XXIV.

CHRIST'S UNCHANGEABLENESS.

HEBREWS xiii. 7, 8.

Remember them which have the rule over you, who 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.

How highly honoured were the Hebrews, in having been blessed with such faithful pastors! They were men of God, who made their light shine before others, who adorned the doctrine of their Saviour in all things, and exemplified the instructions they gave; who were vessels of mercy fit for their Master's use, and made known the path of salvation

gospel, who had got before them to glory, longed for the aid of their melodious voices to join them in some new song of praise, to him who had brought them through so many tribulations, and crowned them with immortal honour. Ministering angels wished to learn from those ambassadors of Christ, what was transacting on earth, for the spread of the everlasting gospel; or the great Lord of the vineyard, provoked with the abounding of iniquity, and determined to take vengeance on a disobedient people, called away those faithful servants from the evil to come, and graciously released them from the anguish of witnessing the desolations of Zion; therefore they were translated from the church on earth, to the fellowship of the saints in heaven; and having lived to the honour of their Lord in the churches, were called to bear their part in sublimer services in the mansions of glory.

But though dead, these watchmen of Israel still spake. Every recollection of their amiable manners, of their fervent prayers, of their earnest exhortations, of their faithful discourses, and exemplary conduct, had in it a

voice

voice of instruction and admonition, which survivors were called upon affectionately to remember, and wisely to improve; hence says the inspired apostle, in the instructive language of the text, "Remember them who have spoken to you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation; Christ Jesus."

The leading features of a faithful pastor are here delineated; and it becomes you of this congregation, to contemplate the character exhibited to you, that you may be enabled to comply with the apostle's counsel, by profitably remembering, and practically improving, the exemplary conversation and conduct of your late justly esteemed spiritual instructor.

I. He spoke to you the word of God :
II. He lived by faith : III. Jesus Christ
was the end of his conversation.

I. He spake to you the word of God with plainness and fidelity; he handled not the word deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commended himself to every man's conscience. He was a scribe well instructed

structed in all the mysteries of the gospel ; and from the treasures of his knowledge, and of his accurate research, he brought to your view things new and old. He neither disguised nor concealed any part of the counsel of God ; he never deceived you with cunningly devised fables, and never amused you with the unavailing speculations of vain philosophy ; but counted it his highest honour to preach Christ Jesus, and him crucified, and to declare the gospel of the grace of God.

In speaking to you the word of God, he eminently excelled in what is not always found even amongst evangelical preachers,—accurate and just criticism, united with earnest and animated exhortation ; and also a happy talent of exhibiting the intimate connection which subsists between the various parts of the Christian scheme. Having laid the foundation, he with equal care reared the superstructure ; having taught the necessity of faith and regeneration, he unfolded the genuine effects of these divine principles ; having explained the privileges of believers, he urged upon them the duties required ; having shewn the indispensable necessity of
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regulating your tempers, and language, and life by the word of God, he excited and animated your prayers and hopes, by reminding you of the promised influences of the Spirit, to help your infirmities, and lead you into all truth, and sanctify you wholly.

I might here remark the manner in which he spake to you the word of God; that his preaching, and teaching, and exhortation, were with unaffected devotion, and happy perspicuity, and manly fortitude, and most affectionate earnestness.

II. But without dwelling longer on this part of the subject, let me now carry forward your meditations, from the truths he illustrated, to the living faith he exemplified: “Whose faith follow.”

Your late useful Pastor lived by faith, in the full and proper meaning of that expression; he lived under habitual impressions of the important truths which scripture reveals; in a constant reliance on the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, and under the powers of the world to come.

By this faith, his heart was purified from those unhallowed passions which reign in the
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the ungodly, was filled with that warm piety and benevolence, which excited your esteem and commendation; and was exalted to that heavenly-mindedness which produced the serene tranquillity, for which he was distinguished amidst the duties, toils, and trials of life.

This unfeigned faith was implanted in his soul by sovereign grace, even in his early days; maintained its influence amidst the snares of youth, and pursuits of literature, kept him unspotted from the world, and enabled him to shine brighter and brighter to the perfect day.

Here, for your instruction and consolation, let me say a few things concerning his personal religion; the gradual progress of which I was favoured with the happy opportunity of tracing, in consequence of our long, interesting, and uninterrupted habits of intimacy and friendship.

When about to speak of his personal religion, it may not be improper to remark, the advantages he enjoyed in being the seed of the righteous; for though grace descends not in regular succession from parents to their children, yet if you attend to the faithful in

Jesus

Jesus Christ, you will find, that the far greater proportion consists of those who have been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

It was the happiness of your late Pastor, to descend from a race of distinguished and exemplary Christians.

His grand-father was esteemed one of the most judicious, learned, and worthy ministers of the age in which he lived; he was translated from an obscure situation, to the conspicuous and arduous charge of a minister of Perth. There he laboured with singular diligence, success, and comfort. So strong and mutual was the attachment between him and his people, that though chosen Professor of Divinity in the University of St. Andrews, yet, at the united and earnest intreaty of all ranks in Perth, he declined accepting of that honourable appointment.

Your Pastor's maternal grandfather, was that holy and venerable man of God, the Reverend Mr M'Vicar, one of the ministers of St. Cuthberts, or West Kirk. His praise is in all the churches, as a faithful labourer in the vineyard, whom few have excelled in warmth of devotion, and love to the Redeemer;

deemer ; in primitive simplicity of manners, and unblemished circumspection of conduct ; in undaunted fortitude for evangelical truth, and in patriotic zeal for the prosperity of his country.

Your Pastor's father succeeded to his father's charge in Perth, and for thirty-three years ministered there, with no common degree of respectability, eminence, and usefulness ; universally esteemed for his learning and information, his meekness and humility, his prudence and propriety of conduct. After his decease, the children whom he left behind, were reared with unwearied attention by the best of mothers, eminently pious, prudent, and affectionate ; who had the unspeakable comfort of seeing her children walking in the truth, and serving the God of their fathers with willing mind. Those of them who are now no more, were truly lovely, and truly godly in their lives, and gave most satisfying evidence of their dying in the faith and hope of the gospel.

Having said these things concerning your late Pastor's family-connections, let me here remind you, that the personal religion which he experienced and manifested, flowed from

a higher source, than even the powerful influence of parental instruction and example ; from that heavenly grace, without which all means are unavailing, and from that vital faith, of which Christ Jesus is the object and author.

I have already remarked, that the good work of grace was begun in the soul of your worthy Pastor, at an early period of his life : He was about ten years of age when my acquaintance with him commenced. Young as he then was, to read the scriptures was his delightful employment ; young as he then was, he gave himself to secret prayer, and listened with eager attention, and with expressive looks, to the pious converse of serious friends who visited and comforted his widowed mother.

From that period, he uniformly expressed a desire to consecrate himself to the service of the sanctuary. This wish was encouraged by his parent and friends ; and the prospect of being a minister of the gospel, regulated all his future schemes, animated him to unwearied diligence in all the studies preparatory for the sacred office, and sweetened the labour which it cost him to acquire
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that complete knowledge, which he possessed, of the various branches of academical education, especially of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages.

When attending the University of this city, in the prosecution of his studies, he carefully avoided all acquaintance with the licentious and profane; connected himself with the pious, both old and young; and promoted among his companions at College, societies for their mutual improvement in literature, and meetings for prayer and praise, and reading the scriptures, and religious conversation.

Scarcely had he reached the age of twenty-two, when, with much joy to the lovers of our Zion, he was ordained a minister of the gospel, and was entrusted with the charge of a respectable congregation in the neighbourhood of Perth. There he enjoyed the full confidence, the high respect, and warm affection of his people: He had gone amongst them, not only with their full consent, but at their united request; and in all his ministrations among them they greatly delighted, and the pleasure of the Lord evidently prospered in his hand.

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When brought by providence to the more extensive, and far more arduous charge which he has held in this city, he determined to labour among you with unwearied diligence; and to decline no toil, no difficulty, no sufferings, to which he might be exposed, in promoting the glory of God, and the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom.

The master whom he served, stood by him and strengthened him; honoured him to finish his course without one stain upon his character; enabled him to continue faithful unto death, and rendered his acceptable labours singularly useful to many whom he has left behind him, and to others, who with him have gone to that land of promised rest which remains for the people of God. You are witnesses, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, he behaved himself among you; and you can testify, that his conversation was indeed without guile or deceit; that he was gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children; and that the faith which he preached and professed, promoted in him the most endearing amiableness of disposition, and produced in his
life,

life, all the fruits of uniform Christian deportment.

Before I finish my observations respecting his personal religion, permit me to add, that the faith of the gospel kept his mind free from anxious care about the future provision of his young and rising family.

When much enfeebled in body, he was enabled to look forward to the dissolution of the earthly tabernacle without dismay, and rejoiced in hope of the glory to be revealed. Concerning his family, his dignified and composed language then was : “ I can leave the dear partner of my heart, and the dear pledges of our mutual love, upon the care and faithfulness of my heavenly Father : He has made with me an everlasting covenant, well-ordered in all things, and sure, and has graciously promised to be the God of my seed ; he is faithful, and will not deny himself ; he will keep what I have committed to him, and his blessing will be upon mine offspring.”

III. Having spoken of your Pastor's doctrine and life, of the truths he taught, and the faith he exemplified, let me next call
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your remembrance and imitation, to the animating motive of his conduct and fidelity, the love of Christ, and zeal for his glory: Consider the end of his conversation, Christ Jesus.

Seldom has this motive operated, with more unfeigned ardour, than in the bosom of your late worthy Pastor. His whole soul glowed with love to Jesus: calm and composed as his natural temper was, yet when the Redeemer's name was dishonoured, when the interests of Christianity seemed at stake, or when prospects opened of extending the triumphs of the gospel, then he was animated to active exertion, and shewed that the love of Christ constrained him; and that he counted not his life dear, if he might glorify his beloved Master, and fulfil the ministry which he had received.

What motive to exertion can be more becoming in Christian ministers! Attachment to our blessed Redeemer is all the return we can render him, for the great love wherewith he has loved us; for the rich grace he has manifested to our immortal souls; for the spiritual blessings he has promised

mised to bestow; and for the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory he has gone before to prepare. Deeply engraved were these sentiments on the heart of your amiable Pastor; and neither the prospect of gain, nor the promise of preferment, nor the love of applause, could bribe him to listlessness or indifference in whatever regarded the progress of the gospel.

But your time will not permit me to dwell longer on the talents, labours, and worth of him who was endeared to my heart, by many ties of closest union and unutterable tenderness. The feelings of affection urge me to say much more in his praise, but these feelings must on the present occasion be restrained; and had they not been greatly restrained in the whole of this day's service, the mind, the strength, and voice of him who now addresses you, would ere now have failed.

But we sorrow not as those who have no hope: That faithful watchman of Israel died in the Lord; he now rests from his labours; he is for ever released from warfare and from woe; is united to far nobler society than what he left behind, and is engaged in far
nobler

nobler contemplations and employments than he ever could have known on earth.

The time, and all the circumstances of his death, were under the direction of that wisdom which cannot err, and will be fully explained when that saying shall be accomplished, “What I do, ye know not now; but ye shall know hereafter.”

Instead, therefore, of dwelling longer on the character of the deceased, let me conclude this discourse, by intreating you so to remember his words, as to be followers of him, who through faith and patience is now inheriting the promises.

First, I call upon the congregation at large, to retain on their mind an affectionate remembrance, and a practical consideration, of his doctrine and life. He had you much on his heart in his daily prayers; kept your spiritual interests ever in view, and spoke of you with the warmest regard. The many strong proofs you gave of stedfast attachment to his ministry, were the joy of his heart; the regularity of your attendance on the ordinances of religion; the earnestness and unanimity of your intreaties, that he would not remove to any of the other charges

of this city; the eagerness with which you crowded to secure seats in this newly erected church, before the building was finished; these, and many other testimonies of affection, were highly gratifying to his feelings, and were considered by himself and his friends, as comfortable evidences that his services were highly acceptable, and that he had not laboured among you in vain. For your benefit he lived, and studied, and ministered; with you on his heart he died; and could he now address you from the mansions above, his affectionate counsel would be, Remember the words I have spoken to you: I believed, and therefore I spake; the gospel which I preached to you, was the joy and rejoicing of my heart: Let it be all your salvation and desire; live in the faith of what it testifies, and in the hope of what it promises; make it the standard of your principles, the guide of your practice, and the source of your consolation: Search the scriptures, for in them are the truths I have taught you, and they testify of Christ: Speak of them to your children when sitting in the house, and walking in the fields; explain to them what the sacred volume reveals and requires;

requires; and never, never forget, that I earnestly admonished you, and solemnly charged you, to bring up your families in the nurture of the Lord, to worship him in your habitations, to keep holy his Sabbaths, and to reverence his sanctuary.

Second, I call upon the youth connected with this congregation, to remember with affectionate consideration, him who spake to them the words of eternal life. You, he ever considered as the most important part of the charge with which he was entrusted; and seldom did he finish any set of discourses, without a particular improvement addressed to the rising generation, and without important counsels suited to your circumstances and age.

Remember therefore his words: With what affectionate earnestness he endeavoured to engrave on your mind the deepest impressions of the value of the soul, and the importance of its salvation; of the inspiration and authority of the scriptures, and the grandeur and preciousness of the truths they contain: Remember how faithfully he guarded you against the infidelity of the age, the allurements of pleasure, the attacks of ridi-

cule, and the delusions of the heart; how tenderly he warned you against the dangerous influence of worldly maxims and manners, and expostulated with you on the folly of preferring the short-lived pleasures of sin, to an eternity of purest bliss. His voice was as melody to your ears, and his doctrine distilled as the dew. Forget not his last instructive discourses on the history of Joseph: and forget not the solemn charge, which, on the first Sabbath of each revolving year, he used to urge on your attention. "Seek the Lord while he may be found; delight yourselves in God; acknowledge him in all your ways, and he will direct your steps."

Third, I call upon those to remember him; who through grace derived benefit and consolation from his ministrations.

I am fully persuaded, that he laboured not in vain, that the words he spake proved not as water spilt upon the ground, but were often accompanied with divine power, when he knew it not.

Some wanderers from God and duty were arrested in their path of folly, convinced of the error of their ways, and converted to the

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the obedience of the truth. Some weeping Hannah, of a sorrowful spirit, was comforted by the message he brought, and encouraged to cast her burdens on the Lord. Some captive prisoners were released from long spiritual bondage, and some weary travellers were strengthened with inward might.

If you have thus felt, give God the glory; and murmur not that he has taken his servant to himself, for the Lord liveth, blessed be your rock; Christ Jesus remains the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and though the streams are dried up, the fountain remains ever flowing, and ever full. But remember the words which your spiritual instructor has spoken unto you, and be ye followers of him, as he was of Christ: Like him, press forward to the heavenly Zion: promote religion by your example, and influence, and counsels, and prayers; and, like him, live not to yourselves, nor to the world, but to the glory of God, and in the patient waiting for the coming of Christ.

Lastly, I call upon the careless and licentious, to remember him who spake to them
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them with fidelity, the things which belong to their everlasting salvation.

Often, perhaps, you sat listless and inattentive, while he was unfolding the glories of the gospel, or was recommending that gospel, by those impressive arguments which wisdom, and learning, and piety, united to suggest. Though dead, he still speaks; though this faithful reprover is removed, and will never again alarm you with proclaiming the terrors of the Lord, yet sooner or later, you shall know that a prophet has been among you. In some season of danger, or in the night of adversity, or in the prospect of death, it will be brought to your remembrance how you hated instruction, and despised reproof; how you secretly reviled the faithful preacher, and scorned his earnest invitations as the language of enthusiasm; how you refused when he called, and regarded not when he stretched forth his hands; how you said in your heart, O that he would speak unto us smooth things, would prophesy deceits! for we have made a covenant with death, and are at agreement with hell!

If such have been your feelings and conduct

duct hitherto, if you have loved darkness rather than light, consider your danger, and awake from your fatal security. Consider that if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; and that if they who despised the law of Moses, died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment will *they* be thought worthy, who neglect the great salvation, and trample under foot the blood of the covenant!

You have despised the servants of the Lord, have grieved their spirit by your impenitence, and embittered their midnight hours; you have despised the Lord of these servants, and have crucified Christ afresh by your transgressions! Yet he still waits to be gracious, and beseeches you to consider your latter end; to lay down the weapons of your rebellion, to repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, and that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

If your late pastor, who, when on earth, laboured so sincerely for your conversion, was permitted once more to address you from this place, his language would be, Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die? Harden not
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your hearts, as in former days. Behold, I bring near the glorious Redeemer's righteousness, and make known his salvation; he stands at the door of your hearts, and knocks; though, therefore, ye have been stout hearted, and far from righteousness, yet turn, and your souls shall live; come unto him, and he will in nowise cast you out. This is the word of the Lord; may you be brought to believe it aright, and believing, to say unfeignedly: Faithful and compassionate Redeemer! to whom can we go but unto thee, for thou alone hast the words of eternal life. Receive us graciously, love us freely, heal our backslidings, and pardon our iniquities; so will we be to thee for a name and praise; we will follow thee through good and bad report, and will live, not unto the will of the flesh, but to him who loved us, and gave himself for us; who redeems us from our sins by his blood; to whom be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

FINIS.





