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# SERMONS

ON

## DIFFERENT SUBJECTS,

BY THE

REV. SAMUEL HORSFALL,

CURATE OF SILKSTONE, AND LATE RECTOR OF GRESSENHALL,

IN NORFOLK.

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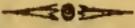
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# SERMON I.



ISAIAH XXXVIII. 11.

*I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.*

DEATH, if not considered with a reference to another world, would certainly be the most insupportable affliction that could befall the children of men. When we have become familiar with the objects around us, they wear an interesting appearance, and excite emotions of regret on a separation: this we find to be the case with respect to the inanimate works of the creation. But when we are to part with those whose society we valued, and whose friendship we loved, we feel that we have sensibilities that attach us so strongly to others, that when death cuts the cords of amity, the pang of separation would be too much for us to bear;—despair

would render us impatient of life, and we should, perhaps, be almost ready to search in the grave for that oblivion our friends have found, did not the hope of our meeting them in another life, help and sustain us to bear their separation from us in this.

Strange then is it that there should be any who endeavour to reason themselves out of all hopes of immortality!—That they should labour for arguments to prove they must perish like the beasts of the field! Surely this is perverting that reason bestowed on them by God Almighty: yet this is by no means uncommon in these days of infidelity, and we find many who are still ready to ask, “How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?”

Thanks be to God! the Gospel furnishes us with every argument we want to satisfy the humble christian, who is sufficiently supplied with the assured hopes of living again after death: he leaves to God to bring it about, confiding in the promises given him by his Saviour, who himself died and was buried and rose again the third day.

Yes, my brethren! we have the strongest hopes

that God will restore us to the friends we mourn. Death, however clothed in imaginary terrors, is really no more than a necessary deposition of our corruptible body in the earth, in order that it may be changed into an incorruptible body, and become glorified, spiritualized, and immortal.

With this view the words of the text are not the language of complaint, but become a mere observation upon an indisputable fact. We certainly shall “behold man no more with the inhabitants of “the earth!” Death closes our eyes from this sublunary scene; we are for evermore debarred the social converse of our friends in this world; we part with every thing we hold dear—parents, children, brothers, sisters, and every endearing tie of affection is dissolved by the stroke of death. The gay verdure of nature, the cheerful notes of birds, the herds and flocks, and all the busy haunts of commerce and of pleasure no longer shall delight or please us more. The sun blazing in the firmament, the moon and the stars walking in silent majesty their nightly round, will no longer charm. The eye that gazed with pleasure on a beloved object, the countenance

that glowed with mirth, the throbbing heart that beats in unison to the impulse of friendship or benevolence, will be at rest. Death puts an end to all; and with this prospect a sigh will involuntarily escape, and a tear unawares will steal down the cheek: but then, my brethren! let us elevate our hopes to another world, to a life after death, and to the glories of a heaven, where our God sits enthroned in boundless majesty, and in all the splendour of ineffable light, surrounded by myriads of winged cherubim, dispenses felicity to those who have passed through the bars of death, and entered the everlasting doors: and with an eye of faith we shall behold the friends we shall hereafter join, rewarded with the crown of immortality, and no longer mourn their loss. The half-bursting sigh will be suppressed, and the tear that dims the eye will for ever be done away.

To the worldly-minded man, whose interest lies on this side the grave, to “behold man no more  
“with the inhabitants of the world,” is at once to cut him off from all his fondest expectations; for his wishes being confined to this life, he is regard-

less of another. *Here* is his plan for speculative operations—*here* he can put his artifices in execution, and with collusive schemes, obtain the means to pursue whatever object of enjoyment suits his depraved taste. He has no desire—he has no hope beyond the grave: this motto of the Epicurean is his: “Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die.” He lives only for the present, and therefore for him to be cut off from this world in the very midst of all his earthly projects—to “behold man no more,” would be to snatch him from a scene where all his happiness centres, and beyond which he has neither hope nor desire. Death to such a man as this, would be a stroke against which he could not stand, but would pierce his heart through with many sorrows, and he would wish the apprehension of sinking into nothing, like the brute-beasts was true, lest he should meet that fate his conscience would at that hour eloquently tell him he merited for his neglect, contempt, and unbelief of the consoling hopes of the christian religion.

But how different are the hopes and prospects of the true christian! He knows properly how to ap-

preciate "man and the inhabitants of the world." He considers him as a fellow-candidate for eternal life; he fulfils his duties with alacrity and zeal; and he acts up to all that integrity and candour, in his dealings with men, which his consideration of their mutual claims, as disciples of the same Saviour, give them a right to expect. He follows the dictates of inclination as well as the libertine, but he pursues the object of his desires with prudence, moderation, and discretion; well knowing that God has not given us appetites but to be indulged; not given passions to us to be our masters, but for us to govern them and bring them into subjection to the laws of temperance. He, therefore, having discharged his essential duties and obligations as a christian to his God and Saviour, and fulfilled the precepts of the Gospel with regard to his place in society, may with confidence look to the assured hopes of salvation, and to the happy enjoyment of the friends whose deaths he laments, in another and a better world; relying on the gracious promise of that beatitude delivered by our Saviour in his sermon on the mount, whose compassion was ever feelingly

alive to the sorrows of human nature—"Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted."

These words bring consolation, let the heart wring with what woe it will: they must assuage every anguish, and alleviate the regret of a mere temporary separation. If we mourn here we shall be blessed with comfort hereafter—comforted for ever, with the enjoyment of an eternal round of happiness never to be separated more.

Blessed! for ever blessed be the God of our fathers! who to redeem us from all iniquity, and to make us kings and priests unto God for ever, hath sent his Son to bestow on us a religion that abounds with the divinest consolations for the most grievous afflictions that can befall us in this world of sorrow. No other religion but ours has pointed out to us the advantageous tendency of afflictions, which are sent to exercise our virtues, and to form us for the enjoyment of heaven, the happiness of angels, and the presence of God. Let this thought be frequent on your minds; never lose sight of this soothing idea, and be assured, in every temporal distress, your religion will bring comfort to your

afflicted mind, and heal every wound your bosom feels at either a sudden; or a long-expected separation from the dearest of your friends by death. What gratitude ought we not to feel! What rapture must take place in our bosoms on contemplating a religion founded in love, and terminated in a felicity eternal, glorious, unchangeable, and unspeakably happy! Surely by the rules it prescribes, by the commandments (which are far from grievous) it sets before us, we shall stedfastly pursue the path of our Saviour, who calls to us with such an affectionate voice as must encourage us to follow: "Come unto me all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls."

Were we to confine our expectations to this perishable globe, without a reference to an hereafter, and disregard the cheering summons of our Lord, to copy his example in the virtues of meekness and humility, an eternal rest to our souls would be denied us: nay, even this life would appear the gift

of an arbitrary being, whose delight was to sport with the miseries, which the creatures he had made cannot avoid; and the reason with which he had endowed them above the instinct of the brute creation, could only be given them to render them more sensible to the comfortless idea of perishing like them. And furthermore, how shocking the consideration that every tender connexion would be for ever broke, that forms what little portion of happiness we can enjoy in this world! To reflect on man, whose society we had enjoyed, and of "the inhabitants of the world," whom we had beheld with pleasure and satisfaction, would be a séparation utterly irreconcilable to the cold oblivion of an eternal death! But far, very far be such uncomfortable thoughts from every one who calls himself a christian: We ought to be inspired with such sentiments as would produce more composed reflections than those of grief. Let our loss or calamity be ever so great, we should entertain the consoling idea that we shall meet our friends again, in a world where affliction and sorrow are not so much as known.

Can distress in our temporal concerns? can the loss of all the goods of this world, so that we are reduced to the most afflicted state that ever man endured? can poverty, keen-gripping want, and all the dire train of evils which sickness, pain, and torment introduce? can the loss of our dearest friends and relatives? In short, suppose the utmost affliction of every kind united to fall on one man! can such a state give him more than a moment's pang, when he considers what joy and consolation await him in the next world? No, my brethren! the religion we profess gives every assurance, that "our light afflictions, which are only "for a moment, will work for us a far more ETERNAL WEIGHT of glory."

Our religion was made "for man, and all the inhabitants of the world," whom while we live on earth we are commanded to love, to esteem, and befriend. Why then should there be any so self-righteous, as to let a difference in certain points of faith, break the bonds of that love which our Saviour has pointed out to be due to all mankind? He died for all, and the salvation effected by his death

on the cross shews us, that as his love was boundless, and flowed without distinction to all men, so ought ours to do.

Charity or love—compassion and benevolence to fallen man was the groundwork of his religion: he made no difference between Jew and Gentile, bond or free. Mere speculative opinions, which every man will form for himself, are no grounds for any animosities or dissensions amongst those who call themselves his disciples. No one therefore can have any right to condemn others who, perhaps, in their religious duties may be stricter than himself, though they may not have thought it necessary to separate from the public mode of worship: nor can he, without being guilty of the most horrid blasphemy, presume to announce them to be in a state dangerous to the salvation of their souls, because they continue stedfast in the doctrines of the Church, and follow not like him the wild opinions of every misguided zealot. This is to arrogate to himself the divine prerogative of passing the sentence of eternal punishment: it is to displace the God of mercy from his throne, and to

seize on his thunderbolts to crush a fellow-creature, merely because he chuses to follow that mode of worship pursued by his forefathers.

Look to the tomb and we must soon be convinced that in death all are equally alike. The grave contains men of all ranks, sects, and persuasions, and we may rest satisfied that he who lives a life of holiness, in death will be accepted; and in that better world, when our souls have taken wing, we hope to find that God in Christ will receive every faithful follower—he himself has declared it.

All difference of opinion then will cease: our final Judgment (thanks to the Almighty) depends not on our fellow-men, but on our acting up to that religion we profess, and following from a purity of heart and mind, that mode of worship we in our consciences think to be just, without assuming a right to condemn that of others.

Elevate your thoughts, my brethren, to the splendid glories of those numberless multitudes of every nation, kindred, and tongue, that day and night encompass the throne of God, crowned with dazzling and immortal brightness—vested with gar-

ments white as snow, and holding palms of victory in their hands! And shall any sect or persuasion assert that these exalted glories are reserved for them alone? The thought has in it so much of blasphemy, that I shudder at the idea there should be any man who calls himself a disciple of the merciful Jesus, that can a moment entertain so uncharitable an opinion.

The comforts of our religion afford large and ample hopes of salvation for every true disciple of Christ, and for none more than those who mourn the loss of friends by death, where all distinction will for ever cease.

With the assured hopes, my brethren! of our being united to those whom we dearly loved on earth, and participating with the true disciples of every denomination in all the glories and felicities of heaven; let us beseech the Almighty, through the merits of our Redeemer, that in our opinions of each other, during our abode in this world, we may be charitably disposed to obey that most righteous and just precept of his: "Judge not that ye be not judged."

## SERMON II.



ST. JAMES V. 13.

*Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray.*

TO this question of the apostle there are but few who would not answer in the words of the plaintive Jeremiah: "I am the man that have seen affliction." Every one has his sorrows, and feels the hand of distress press heavy upon him in one way or other. Let him be the most exalted of men as to earthly dignity, encompassed with all the honours ambition could either wish for or desire, yet affliction will reach him amidst all his pomp and splendour. Riches, we every day see, cannot secure the possessors of them from the calamitous incidents of life: and the voluptuary, im-

mersed as he seems in pleasure, will find sooner or later this scourge of mankind embitter all his enjoyments. Nay, not only those who are engaged in worldly pursuits, after these great idols of mankind—honours, riches, and pleasures; but likewise those whose lives are led in holiness and purity are subject to the stroke of affliction, and even frequently are visited with a heavier oppression than either the man of ambition, the miser, or the sensualist.

Miserable indeed would be the lot of good men under their afflictions, did not religion point out to them the reasons why God visits them with this chastisement, viz. for the trial of their virtues, and to store their minds with every encouraging reflection;—and that God has besides provided a consolation and a refuge for them in the time of distress. It is to this consolation the apostle points in the text: “Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray.”

Although affliction comes not forth like man from the dust, yet as soon as he is animated with the breath of life, as the sparks of the enkindled

flame ascend upward, so affliction “ grows up with “ his growth,” and augments as years increase. To whom then shall we fly for succour to relieve us under this burden, or to render us able to bear it with the patience becoming creatures whom sin and disobedience made obnoxious to calamities of every kind, but to that God, who has ever graciously attended to the devout supplications of his servants, to whom, in the earliest ages he declared himself a God—“ merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.”

To pray to the Almighty—to bend the knee before his footstool—to lay our wants before him—pour out the sorrows of our hearts, and address him for support during the season of affliction, is the highest privilege we enjoy as men. Though the personal intercourse, or conversation with the immediate presence of God, has long ceased, yet to the meanest individual this resource is open. As God fills the vast regions of unlimited space, turn where he will, his presence invites the sincere

worshipper to offer his solemn addresses, and encourages him to hope for every wish of his heart; provided it is submissively left to his divine wisdom to judge of its real utility, whether it would in the end prove a blessing or otherwise.

Not only the season of affliction requires our supplications to be addressed to the throne of infinite mercy; but the many blessings we enjoy demand our incessant praises, as they more than overbalance the miseries we suffer, did we but rightly estimate both them and the goodness of God: but surrounded with calamity, our sufferings will not permit us to give this certain fact its due consideration, else we should see cause frequently to pour forth our gratitude, not only for the numberless blessings, but even for the afflictions we sustain.

But such is the nature of man, that affliction of whatever kind, as it is the best trial of our patience, so it is almost the only state that brings us to a proper sense of our dependence upon God. We are then taught the best of lessons, how properly to value those blessings we have enjoyed, which have neither had our thanks, nor been deemed a

gift of God; but when we are deprived of them, then we know to whom we have been indebted for their enjoyment, and learn too late to appreciate their true worth.

This indeed is the case with every gift of God; but more particularly with one, which especially in youth we are apt to slight and abuse the most—I mean *health*: in the enjoyment of which the heart bounds with transport to the voice of mirth, and pants to enjoy the delusive scenes of pleasure, which we then fancy will never end nor ever cloy. Boundless our ideas range over the gay visionary dreams of imaginary bliss, and we exult at the prospect of never-ceasing joys. Our youthful fancies deck every object we pursue in such captivating colours, as irresistably attract our admiration, and we rush to the enjoyment, in the fond expectation, that a succession of pleasures will entrance our souls and intoxicate our senses in a round of perpetual delights; till at length we find to our cost, that nature has fixed bounds which we ought not to have passed; and that the unrestrained indulgence of our passions beyond these, never fails to

bring their own punishment, in a numerous train of evils:—diseases, the fatal effects of intemperance and riot; and poverty, the certain consequence of waste and prodigality.

When we contemplate the variety of disorders incident to our nature, we shudder at the reflection on such a melancholy catalogue; and whether we consider them as the consequences of an early indulgence in licentious pleasures, or as trials of our virtues, still they are the kind visitations of a God of Mercy, who afflicts only to heal—to prove our confidence in him alone—to bring us to a proper sense of our mortality—to exercise the patience of the devout, and to call the sinner to repentance.

How good then is God, who designs our benefit in these chastisements. Without repentance the sinner cannot hope for pardon, and without affliction, the good man can give no proof of his possessing those virtues which are most pleasing to God: but both, to obtain that which alone can render their patience or penitence acceptable, must pray to the Almighty for the assistance of his grace; the one, that he may be enabled to shew

forth the sincerity of his repentance, and the other, to be endued with the requisite fortitude to bear him through his affliction. *Prayer* then is our help in time of need; and it is graciously appointed as a duty which will be accepted when offered up in sincerity. While we enjoy the blessing of health, and no calamity befalls our worldly concerns, we ought to thank God for his preservation, and the daily benefits we receive at his hands; and to pray that we may continue to merit his bounty: but alas! we are too apt to forget this duty when in possession of health and prosperity, and nothing but some kind affliction will bring us to a due sense of its importance and necessity.

To pray to the Almighty is by some, in excuse for the neglect of it, deemed an unnecessary duty, as God must know our necessities before we ask. If this objection were ever seriously made, it is one in which both folly and wickedness are surely apparent! For ought the foreknowledge of God, as to our future wants, to prevent us from doing that on which he has laid so strict an injunction? Therefore it is both folly and wickedness to lessen

the value of a duty, of which he has been pleased to declare his acceptance, when offered in sincerity.

By others all written forms are presumptuously declared to be wrong, if not impious, and address God in the spontaneous effusions of the heart on all occasions, let what words come first to utterance. Did we know in every exigency with what words to address the Almighty, and could ourselves foresee what would be really beneficial or not, our prayers, thus uttered without any previous reflection or arrangement might be efficacious: but that our Saviour himself approved of a prescribed form is manifest, when his disciples asked him to teach them to pray, as John also taught his: as no one, imperfect as we are in all knowledge, even at the best, knows how to pray as he ought; he assented to their request, by immediately giving them a short, but comprehensive form of prayer.

In all the phrenzy of pharisaical zeal, this prayer, though uttered by our Saviour for the use of his disciples, is by many considered in an inferior light to the words their vanity prompts them to utter, when addressing their prayers to the Al-

mighty, even through the intercession of its divine Author, who in the following words seems to caution us against this very error: "When ye pray," says he, "use not vain repetitions as the heathens do, for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking:" which advice is as necessary to be given to these misguided zealots, as to those of whom our Saviour spoke. "Be not rash with thy mouth," says the Preacher, "nor let thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou on earth, therefore let thy words be few."

By no means do I intend to undervalue those prayers offered up in sincerity to the throne of grace, which, without previous reflection set forth the exigencies of the humble and contrite: they will find acceptance with him whose ear is ever open to the cry of his servants; and the ejaculatory address of the moment may be more efficacious than the long-winded prayers of those who measure their devotion by the time they are upon their knees. My sole intention is to shew, that the imperfection of our understanding is such, that a

premeditated form is to be preferred, especially in the public congregation of the people; where, if every one were at liberty to address God in his own words, the place of worship would resemble the confusion of Babel; or one appointed to utter spontaneous prayers for all, must omit many things necessary, and pray for others not adapted to the exigencies of himself, or of any individual in the congregation.

The necessity of *prayer*, however, being in general allowed by all who have any sense of religion, although they may differ in opinion in other respects; I would apply that necessity to a case when the severest affliction befalls the children of men that can require its practice, in order to bring down the supporting aid of God, to endue us with patience and resignation—I mean, in the trying hour of SICKNESS.

This visitation of the chastising hand of God, is alone sufficient to call forth all our patience. Any misfortune befalling our worldly concerns, is nothing compared with the loss of health; without which we cannot relish the advantages of prosperity,

nor find that state afford any mitigation of pain. In sickness we want every consolation, and unless the mind can be soothed to composure, and a placid resignation under the afflicted state of the body, the conveniences which wealth may procure, bring not more comfort than he enjoys whose aching limbs are stretched on a bed of straw, but whose mind is cheered by the reflection on the goodness of God in this visitation, and who is humble, resigned, and penitent.

The advantages of the christian religion over every other in the last extremity are manifold. To a good man, I know not how it can be otherwise but he must be happy in every sense of the word, on recollecting the numerous promises of divine aid in that awful hour. What connexion—what tie, however tender, can give more than a moment's pain, when death approaches as a messenger to sever it in twain, in order to its being more firmly united hereafter, and for eternal ages linked by the chain of divine love! He comes to introduce him to all the glories of heaven, the choir of Angels, and to the presence of God Most

High:—of that God, who created him in love—redeemed him in mercy, and leading him through the furnace of affliction, enabled him to bear the calamities of life; and who now sustains him in sickness, and will lead him through the gates of death, and admit him to glory.

Would you then, my brethren! behold death divested of his terrors, and finish your course of life with the assured hopes of a dying christian; learn to live in such a manner as that nothing may discompose the serenity of your minds at that hour. Be earnest in your supplications to the Almighty, and pray to him on all occasions, not only in the hour of need, but when health and prosperity attend you the most; so will you be enabled to support yourselves under the disastrous events of life, and the chastisement of sickness. This latter visitation is ever to be considered as a monitor to remind you of your mortality, and requires your most serious reflections: especially if it is the last you are to suffer before death comes to summon you from this scene of trial. Having never omitted this essential duty of prayer to God through life,

you will at this crisis feel its importance, and obtain that fortitude which will render your dying moments fraught with the sublimest consolations: you will close your eyes with resigned tranquillity from this world, as from a scene of trouble, sorrow, and disquietude, and open them on another where brighter prospects arise, and peace and happiness eternally dwell:—where every friend that surrounded your death-bed, and hung over your dying pillow, shall hereafter be joined to you, and unite their hallelujahs to the **LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT, WHO REIGNS FOR EVERMORE.**

## SERMON III.\*



I TIMOTHY VI. 8.

*Having food and raiment let us be therewith content.*

**I**N whatever rank a man may be placed in this world, it is certainly to be considered as the appointment of God, who hath ordained him that situation which in every respect would be best for him, could he only bring himself to think it such. God being allowed to be all-wise, and at the same time good to all the creatures he has made, doubtless knows what station is best for them; what will be productive of the most good to them in this world, and enable them to prepare for the happiness of the next: but it so happens that we seldom reflect on this wisdom and goodness of God in his appoint-

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ment of our respective callings. As we cannot discern the felicity he intends we should enjoy in them, nor see the immediate advantages resulting from them, we are apt to murmur, because we find ourselves placed in a situation beneath that of many others; and give vent to invidious repinings at seeing them enjoy what we suppose to be blessings, but from which we are debarred. Thus do we prevent ourselves from reaping the happiness intended; as envy at the prosperity of others, and murmurs at our wants, take place of those sentiments, which ought to fill our minds, especially reflecting as it behoves us to do, on the wisdom and goodness of Almighty God.

If God knew that a station superior to that which many of you now enjoy, would have produced you more real happiness than what you may enjoy in that in which you now are; you cannot doubt from his goodness but he would have placed you in it: but foreseeing that would not be the case, he has placed you in that station which he judged best for you, and consequently it is your own fault if you are not happy in it.

There is in man a wonderful tendency to destroy his own happiness by creating imaginary grievances. He imagines every man's station better than his own; he envies the lot of a man whom he sees possessing a little dignity and independence above him in the scale of society: and perhaps this very man entertains the same envious ideas with regard to a superior, that prevents him from being happy.

Whatever happiness is to be his portion, a prudent man will endeavour to find it in that station in which he is placed by the appointment of God; well knowing that in every station, even in the highest amongst men, no one can be happy if he strive not to implant it in his own mind. It is a mistake to imagine that happiness is only found in riches, honours, and pleasures: while a man has these sentiments it is impossible for him ever to be happy. I know not a greater error than to place happiness in the pursuit of objects, which, though they gratify a passion or inclination for the moment, yet cease to afford any pleasure the instant that passion subsides.

If happiness had been placed beyond your reach

in this life; if it consisted in those objects your passions deem essential thereto; you might indeed with reason complain of your lot: but when it is in your power to be happy, as much as this world will admit, you have no right to blame Providence for the situation in which you are placed. You cannot, it is true, indulge your passions for any object beyond certain prescribed limits: you cannot pursue every thing you deem necessary to your happiness: your means will not allow it: you have not a sufficiency for these things, and therefore you complain. This is just as rational as it would be to complain of a friend, who withheld you from throwing yourself headlong down a precipice.

You see a man possessed of wealth, splendour, and every thing which you imagine constitutes happiness: you conclude he must be happy, because he enjoys all his wishes. His inclinations to whatever they prompt are instantly gratified:—he has nothing to do but to utter his will, and he is instantly obeyed. How miserably are you deceived in attributing happiness to this man's unlimited enjoyment of all his wishes! In proof of

this, take what the wisest man of all the Hebrews has said on this subject. His elevated rank, for he was a king, afforded him the means to search for happiness in the enjoyment of every thing upon which man can set his heart. He was the most powerful monarch that then reigned in the world, and consequently possessed the means to have every wish of his heart gratified to the utmost:—"Whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them: I withheld not my heart from any joy." And yet after every trial had failed in the pursuit of honours, riches, and pleasures, to procure him the happiness for which he sought, he pronounced the whole to be but "vanity and vexation of spirit."

Happiness then, such as you are to enjoy in this life, is alone to be found where you are placed in society; it is no where else, for it consists not in the possession of riches or honours; nor in the enjoyment of pleasures, or in the indulgence of your appetites. God has not placed it in such things as are so fleeting as the passions, or so changeable as the opinions of men in their gratification: he has placed it in the mind;—in your own power;

and which nothing can take away or destroy but your own desires and envious ideas of the advantages of others. Examine your own state—consider its utility: while you fulfil its duties, you are as respectable members of the community as the highest amongst the sons of men. Your labour preserves your health and procures you both “food and raiment;” and having these, it is in your own power to possess that source of all happiness, from which alone springs what must give you a true relish to enjoy the products of your industry—that composure of mind, which will render your lowly habitations pleasant, and your homely sustenance satisfactory.

*Contentment* is this invaluable blessing, and be assured if you possess it, as it is only in the state of your own minds it can be found, you have as much, and even more than they possess, whose riches and state procure them the gratification of every wish, unless they also look for it in their own bosoms.

Let your opinions of happiness then be guided wholly by your own station, its usefulness, and

rank in society: fulfil its duties with a conscientious exactness, and strictly observe the precepts of your faith as a religious man to God, and to your fellow-creatures. Thus grounding your felicity on the pleasing satisfaction of performing your parts with diligence and fidelity, with sobriety and industry: and then will your minds dwell with conscious pleasure on your own earnings. The fruit of your labour is food for your sustenance, and raiment for your clothing; and beyond these, believe me, every want is a false appetite, that will lead you far from the paths of true happiness. What can you possibly want more than food and raiment, which though plain and homely, will ever be pleasant, as they are the produce of your labour, and the reward of your industry.

But if you launch out beyond your earnings into any extravagance or intemperance, and thereby deprive your families from enjoying their frugal meal with comfort; discontent and misery will soon cause you to disrelish even your own home. There cannot possibly be a man more wretched within himself, and more uncomfortable to others,

than he, who employs the earnings of his labour to gratify the licentiousness of the moment, to the loss of his family: his home becomes insupportable, and his domestic circle, in which he ought to find his chief happiness, present the miserable effects of his folly and intemperance, in cold, nakedness, and hunger.

Keep then within the limits of your earnings, and share with your families in the sustenance your own labours have procured; and fill up your duties, both with regard to religion and society, as far as your knowledge and abilities extend; and contentment will dwell in your habitations, and the glow of cheerfulness will smile in every feature.

But as human nature is subject to infirmity, and sickness will overtake you early or late, attended with all its grievous calamities, a prudent man will take something at stated times from the products of his labour, to treasure up against such an event: and therefore to connect yourselves with others in the same laudable design, and thus to render your stated payments productive of a fund, that shall interchangeably assist one another in

time of need, cannot be too much commended, nor too often practised.

This prudential reserve against calamity, is a peculiar source of contentment, as you are certain of a supply when most of all wanted by yourselves and families, who would otherwise be deprived of all maintenance, when you were rendered incapable through sickness, of supporting them by your labour. Sickness of itself is a most grievous calamity; it wants not the sting of a wounded mind to make it more intolerable: considered only as an inheritance entailed upon us by our parents, or brought upon ourselves by our own folly and want of discretion, it is an attendant of our nature, and ought not to have any additional cause to render it more painful. Therefore when you know you have a refuge in time of need—a resource to which you can fly for support, what secret satisfaction must fill your minds; that your family sustains no loss; but from your former prudential reserve of a portion of your earnings, they and you are supported through your sickness! And besides, this satisfaction may be much improved, by the reflec-

tion on your past conduct; if regulated by industry, sobriety, and temperance; and you have performed your parts with fidelity and justice: then, though your bodies languish with disease, yet your mind is tranquil, and you feel that peace, which whether in health or sickness, can alone produce content.

Every man who may be your superior in the ranks of society, can only ground the happiness of his mind in this world, on the same foundation as you must ground yours—in the possession of a mind unconscious of any ill towards God and man: and in the next world his degree of happiness will not surpass yours, if you fill your station as worthily as he fills his in this. Riches avail not any man, only when having the means to use them for the intent for which they were given, he obeys the will of God in using them for the relief of the distressed. Charity, that part of it which consists in giving money, is certainly not expected so much from you, as it is from the more opulent: but still you have a talent given you, of which you must give as just an account as he that hath ten. You

can then be charitable in the extensive meaning of the word, as well as he whose ample means allow him to be bountiful in distributing pecuniary supplies.

The duties of charity are so comprehensive that no man can plead an exemption from them, let his station in life be what it may. The poorest mortal on earth can be patient, humble, unenvious, kind, peaceable towards all with whom he has any thing to do; he can entertain no evil thoughts against any one, and can rejoice when truth and righteousness prevail: nay, he can by his advice and assistance ease the pains and afflictions of his distressed neighbour, when labouring under any sickness or grievous calamity, and by acts of tenderness and civility, can effectually promote both his comfort and convenience. And what is the doing of these, but according to St. Paul, the performing the most amiable acts of charity? These are the talents entrusted to your care, which if you suffer to lie useless, you will be condemned as unprofitable servants. To assist one another as far as your means will allow, is incumbent on you all.

Whom in your distress would you have to comfort you during sickness, soften the pangs of disease, and render you every needful assistance? You would certainly expect your neighbours to do this, and would prize and value this kindness more in that trying hour than at any other time: then by the same mode of thinking, when they are suffering under the tortures of disease, you will of course “do to them as you wish they should do to you.”

These societies promote this mutual assistance, as far as supporting each other during sickness, and affording those supplies, of which you must feel the want, when incapable of providing them yourselves, and therefore cannot be too much encouraged nor extended. Their excellent tendency to promote mutual good will, and to encourage a frugality in laying up a fund against a time, which come when it will, requires every comfort, and which your stated contributions from your earnings can only afford, demand the approbation of all. Persevere then, my brethren, in your laudable endeavours to benefit your society: destroy not then the prospect of a comfortable support in the

hour of sickness: be industrious in your callings, and moderate in your indulgences with any thing wherein your families may be injured, and yourselves deprived of the consolation of having a resource when attacked by illness or any other misfortune. Industry and frugality can alone procure you either *food* or *raiment*; and having these, it is in your own power, to follow the advice of the apostle to Timothy, to “be therewith content.”

This is the most precious jewel you can possess; and what is more, it cannot so soon be acquired in a more elevated station, as under the roof of him, whose industry and frugality procure the simple and homely fare that sustains himself and family: confining your wishes to these objects, contentment must be your portion. You have not those cares and anxieties which attend on every station above yours: in their stead you possess the means of supporting yourselves, which to an independent mind is a source of satisfaction; and when incapable of doing this, still you have the pleasing reflection that a saving from the profits of your labour contributes to your support, and that

while you are industrious, sober, and frugal, this must continue.

Your other duties are plain and easy: respect and submission to those above you in rank, and acquiescence to all in authority; honesty and integrity in your dealings with each other. And, in short, if you value that peace of mind, from which *contentment* can alone proceed, you will perform every duty required from your rank in life, with that fidelity and stedfastness, becoming both your stations in society, and that dignity you hold equally with the greatest on earth, as religious men and as christians.

## SERMON IV.



PROVERBS XII. 20.

*Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil.*

OF all the pernicious qualities a bad heart can possess, that of *deceit* may be pronounced of the most dangerous tendency: we can never be guarded against its insidious purposes, while it is secretly “imagining evil” to destroy us; for the secrets of the heart lie hid from our eyes, and no man can dive into the thoughts of another. We can see only the exterior side of things, and experience but too often proves how erroneous it is to judge of men by appearance.

How prevalent this vice is may be discovered from the universal complaint of all men. You will

scarcely find any one who does not inveigh against another whom he has either entrusted with his concerns, and been betrayed; or opened to him the secrets of his bosom and has found them divulged; or reposed confidence and been deceived. How is this? Is the world become so bad that we cannot find a man in whom we can repose confidence, or entrust with our concerns, or a friend to whom we may unbosom our souls? May not a degree of culpability attach to us in our choice of persons for these sacred duties? Certainly, but still, this by no means exculpates the generality of men from the charge of *deceitfulness*; for though indiscretion may sometimes mark our choice, yet as “the heart  
“is deceitful and desperately wicked, who can  
“know it?” There is cause for a general censure of a vice which has so destructive a tendency, as to destroy the peace of mind of those, who have had the misfortune to meet with it in the hearts of them, in whom they have placed confidence.

The greatest advantage which a *deceitful man* has over you, is, when to him, with whom you have been in the closest habits of intimacy, you

have at times unwarily disclosed the full knowledge of your concerns, and opened to him the secrets of your heart, and he deceives you. If you should be in distress, to whom should you fly, you naturally imagine, but to this bosom-confidant. He relieves your necessities, and by that means obtains a kind of claim to your implicit confidence. In the unreserved openness of your heart, you may have said things you wish to recal; yet in the confidence of your friend (as you deem him) you hope your secret is safe. You have no secret apart from this your friend, who, in order to lay a claim to a still further confidence from you, will, with apparent sincerity, declare confidentially to you some secrets, of the keeping of which he is perhaps totally indifferent.

All this confidence would be very well, were men's dispositions as friendly and sincere as your own, and if the like disinterested candour ruled the manners and actions of him whom you have chosen for your confidant. But, alas! as "deceit" is in the heart of him that imagines evil," and he has interests independent of yours, he will not

scruple to sacrifice both your friendship and your interest, if the latter, by any means, can be made subservient to his own: and rather than fail, he will endeavour to create a quarrel, in order that his breach of confidence may have some justification. Your secrets—your concerns—your weaknesses are all exposed; and as he has obtained the advantage of the first disclosure to the world, and as men are ever ready to give full credit to the first slander from one known to have been in your confidence; you will never be able entirely to efface the prejudice he has done you in the opinion of the public. Well hath the Prophet Jeremiah said—“Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. Their tongue is an arrow shot out, it speaketh *deceit*; one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour, but in his heart he layeth wait for him.”

But should you have been so unfortunate as to have put yourself in this man's power, by having been, through necessity, obliged to have recourse

to his pecuniary assistance, how will he, in the evil of his heart, triumph in its disclosure! And should adversity befall you, as he was only the friend of your prosperity, he will be one of the first to have recourse to the means such as the law invests every creditor with, to plunge you into further ruin, to regain the sum he lent you in the hour of social intercourse.

Black as this character is, yet still worse is that man's whose countenance wears a perpetual smile, concealing "a heart" that can only "imagine evil;" being so truly deceitful as ever to appear with the air of sincerity and candour. Though not in your confidence, if he has ends to serve which he cannot accomplish but by your means, he will insinuate himself into your friendship under the mask of a respectful demeanour; and while he is searching and endeavouring your ruin, he will overwhelm you with his affected courtesy and apparent cordiality. His seeming attention to your welfare, is to obtain from your confidence the very thing he wants to complete your overthrow, and without which he could not have effected it, nor carried

his secret plans against you into execution. A man of this stamp is far worse than he who on the highway demands your purse: for who can guard against the wiles of an hypocrite? In vain shall the maxim of the world be adopted—to deal with every man as you would with a knave. The man of honour and integrity will not do it; and the man of generosity and liberality cannot adopt an idea so degrading to human nature, as to suppose every man an hypocrite, till he has proved him such. He must therefore ever be the dupe of the designing knave and smiling hypocrite. But who has most cause for mental satisfaction; the man who adopts the cautionary maxim of the world—or he, who in the uprightness of his heart, and in the true spirit of christian charity “thinketh no evil?” Let the Gospel determine.

I am well aware that he, who acts from a principle that will not permit him to harbour an evil opinion of a man, whom he has no reason to suspect of being influenced by a badness of heart, is accounted a weak man, and void of the necessary understanding of the characters of mankind; and

that he suffers justly from his own want of that circumspection it behoves every man to have of his own interest. Indeed, if our own mental satisfaction and happiness depended upon the opinion of others, it might perhaps answer to pay some deference to it in this point, and to act up to their ideas of self-preservation: but as our own happiness depends on our conscious rectitude of intention, though we suffer, yet we should so act, as that from our own mental felicity neither the malice of secret enemies, nor the opinions of others can detract ought that shall disturb its serenity. I am likewise perfectly sensible I am recommending a conduct that will by no means insure you success in the world, but that in its practice you must expect to fail in almost every undertaking: but then I am recommending what will secure you “that peace which the world cannot give”—that inward satisfaction, which, in the midst of all your sufferings from deceitful men, will afford you the best comfort in affliction—the best solace in time of woe, and the only stay through the trying scenes of adversity. I am speaking the language

of holy writ, “and whether it be right in the sight  
“of God to hearken unto men more than unto God,  
“judge ye.”

It is a reflection that bears hard upon mankind, that you can meet with but few in whom a confidence can be placed with any positive hopes of safety. The mind, in its distracted state, suffering all the agonies of distress from some impending calamity, would fain seek shelter and relief in the counsel of a friend. But to whom shall he fly? To the man whom he deemed and has always treated as his confidant? Alas! he fled at the first approach of misfortune! Shall he then go to his neighbour, a man, whom, in all the vanity of self-love, he concludes has a good opinion of him; who will feel for his distress, and give him his best advice? He does—is heard—is pitied, and advice given with apparent sincerity: but not having any further regard for him than what arises from local circumstances, how easily, by the persuasions of a secret enemy may he be turned from his intention of serving the unfortunate with his counsel, and perhaps may at last be brought to join in the slan-

derous aspersions thrown out against him; which will have the more certain effect, because in soliciting his neighbour's advice, the unfortunate is obliged frequently to lay open his whole concerns; and thus possessed of the whole secret, they together are the better enabled the more effectually to stab the heart of a man already pierced through with many sorrows.

Thus, my brethren! do we too often prove the truth of the text, that "deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil." So true is this observation of the wise Solomon, and so justly has he delineated the characters of men, that there is not, in his collection of Proverbs, one more suitable to the present plan of conduct of one man to another. For such is the depravity of the human heart, that in its imagination of evil, nothing suits its malicious designs so well as *deceit*; and it never fails to practise it on the unsuspecting, because such, in the uprightness of their ways, look for nothing less than duplicity in their dealings with others. How then shall we find those whose hearts prone to goodness can harbour no deceit? By being more

circumspect in our choice of friends, and never elevating the companion of our social hours to that sacred character: here is our mistake, and from this we may date all the unhappy consequences of our ill-placed confidence, according to the wise son of Sirach: “ If thou wouldst get a friend, prove him  
“ first, and be not hasty to credit him; for some  
“ man is a friend for his own occasion, and will not  
“ abide in the day of thy trouble: and there is a  
“ friend, who being turned to enmity and strife will  
“ discover thy reproach. Again, some friend is a  
“ companion at the table, and will not continue in  
“ the day of thy affliction; in thy prosperity he  
“ will be bold over thy servants; but if thou be  
“ brought low, he will be against thee, and will  
“ hide himself from thy face.”

But though, my brethren! we suffer from the deceitfulness of others, yet we are not from thence to conclude that truth, sincerity, and real friendship are banished from society. Many there are whose arts imagine and delight in GOOD: it is only “ in the heart of them that imagine EVIL” that deceit is found: but as these unfortunately are the

greater majority, it is necessary that the candid, the open, and sincere should be reminded of the justice of the proverb, in order that they may be upon their guard, and be more cautious in the choice of friends, and of those whom they select for their confidential secrets. A thousand melancholy causes of unhappiness spring from an ill-placed confidence, as every day's experience must convince you, there being such a selfishness in most men, that when their own interest is to be promoted, their imaginations prone to evil, will prompt them to take any advantage an ill-judged confidence has given them, regardless whose happiness they sacrifice, or whose ruin is the consequence of their deceitful and perfidious practices.

I have pointed out to you, my brethren! several instances in this discourse, where deceit is too often practised on the liberal and unsuspecting mind; and it is a painful reflection, that too many of the distressed and unfortunate have, in most cases, found to their sorrow, the account is not too much exaggerated.

But still let *us* act with candour and sincerity in

our dealings; by so doing, we shall at least entitle ourselves to a similar return from others, and if disappointed, we shall secure ourselves a consciousness of acting with integrity, which can alone attend on uprightness of conduct. "Out of the heart," says our Saviour, "proceed evil thoughts." Let us then be cautious, as we know not the thoughts of others, how we expose ourselves to the attacks of secret enemies, who, under the mask of friendship, watch for an unguarded moment to work our overthrow, by the insidious arts of deceitful knavery, or by the exposure of our failings to the fatal shafts of barefaced calumny.

"Out of the heart," says our Saviour, "proceed evil thoughts." Let us then be cautious of giving an ear to the suggestions of the malevolent against any person. Let us examine their motives, and if we find the smallest tincture of malice, we may be assured it proceeds from a heart prone to imagine evil. As to our own conduct, let us not harbour the least ill will against any man, nor suffer ourselves to be biassed from that charitable opinion our benevolent religion has

taught us we ought to entertain towards all mankind: and though the welfare of our temporal interests may require the wisdom of the *serpent* at times, to guard against the wiles of the deceitful; yet let us, as much as possible, imitate the inoffensiveness of the *dove*, as that “with simplicity  
“and godly sincerity we may have our conversa-  
“tion with the world.”

## SERMON V.



1 PETER, IV. 9.

*Use hospitality one towards another without  
grudging.*

TO trace society from the first, when men, prompted by reciprocal wants, were induced to build their habitations contiguous, where mutual offices of kindness and assistance might be interchanged, is a study pleasing to a contemplative mind; as it affords a reason why we feel an innate sense of rectitude prompt our dealings with others; and an involuntary regard and affection urge us to promote one another's happiness, and which would universally prevail, were it not that these generous and noble propensities are debased by selfish principles, which corrupt the worthiest affections of the

heart. Thus society is rendered by man himself subversive of its original design. By malice, envy, and a dire train of malignant passions, the common peace is destroyed, and no one regards the public happiness but as his own is linked with it. God, who formed man for society from the first, has, by a wise inequality of condition, furnished him with the means of assisting his fellow-creatures, and has declared our future happiness depends upon our doing it; yet man still overlooks every interest but his own: and though this inequality has been made the plea for the wildest theories that ever disgraced human reason, yet it is founded by the God of nature. The different capacities of men formed for different occupations and professions; and the various dispositions we see in all men, could only be intended for the mutual necessity we feel for each others ability and assistance: for which necessity we should find no relief, but for those subordinate gradations prevailing in society. Inequality of condition renders a man useful to the community; as by fulfilling the offices of that station in which he is placed, he is enabled to furnish

those things necessary and serviceable to others, who, being of different capacities, have also their respective stations assigned them: and every man who is duly sensible of the benefits he reaps from living in society, will not fail to acknowledge his obligation to others for their assistance, and at the same time admit their claim on him for the like return.

To instigate us to this exchange of mutual intercourse, God has implanted in us certain affections which can only be gratified, and commanded certain virtues which can only be practised as living in society. Friendship, love, and every softer passion of the soul, warranted by virtue, will assimilate and attach to its like: hence domestic connexions and a select circle of friends are formed, in which man finds the chief felicity he is to enjoy in this life: and he who is prompted by these benevolent feelings, will look beyond the ties of domestic union and the circle of endearing friends, and perceiving that all men are not possessed of equal ingenuity—that some are ordained to toil from generation to generation in poverty and want, and

that others are reduced by disastrous events to meet distress in all its variety of forms: he will stretch forth the liberal hand of beneficence, and impart the emanations of his charity to every object in need. To him the necessitous may securely appeal, as he knows that God has given him compassionate feelings, that, in the diffusion of his bounty, the indigent of every denomination may find their compensation for the hardships of poverty: and feeling the mental transport of having done a benevolent act, agreeable to the will of God, and the impulse of his generous bosom, he experiences that certain truth, that every man is "blessed in his deed." But these emotions of true charity are too often stifled by a sordid selfishness; insomuch that God has seen fit to give us laws to enforce our obedience in this respect; nay, has sanctioned them with the hopes of a future reward, or the dread of a future punishment.

Yet man will seldom acknowledge any obligation to extend his services beyond certain limits, to which he will confine his actions of kindness. This is wrong, as it contracts his charity within

too narrow a sphere; whereas it ought still to flow to distant objects, that occasionally come within his view. It is true, that within that circle in which a man lives, and among those friends he has chosen for his associates, his virtues, though more confined, will often be exerted to their service and assistance, if at any time they should be reduced to necessity. Generous, but promiscuous charity may fall on the unworthy; but where every thing passes within his knowledge, he who can withhold his assistance, when his friend or associate is in distress, can neither have real friendship, so as to be received as a member of any circle, nor can be possessed of that universal good will, which would incite him to promote the happiness of any individual whatever.

But the text calls us to a duty seldom considered as a virtue, which nevertheless is one of the chief; since it may justly be considered as the foundation of those mutual good offices, which ought to prevail in society. HOSPITALITY is not that promiscuous entertainment, which displaying an unnecessary superfluity, is lavished with an unsparing

hand on all indiscriminately. It is those friendly and mutual meetings where moderation and temperance preside; where social converse exhilarates the mind, and a chosen few impart the ebullitions of friendship, and endeavour to promote each others happiness, comfort, or pleasure. *Hospitality* in this view, is a most admirable expedient to mitigate the cares of life—to soften the asperity of a ruffled temper, and to tranquillize the spirits. Confined within proper bounds, it is ordained to be the solace of life, and the preservative of that friendship and mutual exchange of kind offices, so essential to every man, whose residence is fixed, and who would otherwise sustain the loss of many comforts. If carried to excess, like every other indulgence, it becomes a vice:—if it serve for luxury, riot, and debauchery:—if it become the cause of profusion, extravagance, and waste, it is as far removed from *hospitality*, as it is from the command of the Apostle.

As many of the self-righteous would exclude *hospitality* from the list of virtues, and pronounce it contrary to that religious deportment becoming

the devout followers of Christ; I have chosen this subject to set it in its proper light; and shall in its defence and recommendation take only our Saviour's words and example for our guide. So useful a virtue—so productive of mutual happiness, and of that interchange of friendly offices, which best prove our love to our neighbour to be such as our Lord recommended, cannot be deemed a subject beneath our consideration, or unworthy of our endeavours to rescue it from that sinfulness which the fanatics of the present day have laboured to attach to it. Indeed, with them, every thing that wears the semblance of cheerfulness; and that does not accord with that gloom, which, for ever hangs around them, is a sin of such an atrocious nature, as deserves eternal punishment. Every innocent recreation that man has chosen to divert the mind, or healthful exercise to invigorate the body, is, in their opinion, contrary to the Gospel, of which they arrogantly affirm they are the only true interpreters. We allow that religion should have our first and principal attention; next, the offices and labours of our respective professions and callings:

but from both these a relaxation is necessary. The mind, as well as the body, is exhausted by dwelling too much on the same subject: and if in these relaxations there is nothing immoral, intemperate, or repugnant to the precepts of religion, (as we shall presently shew they may be so conducted) who shall take upon him the daring prerogative of pronouncing the condemnation of an act, as a sin, which, so far from being so, was on all occasions justified by our Saviour's example.

The first miracle which the blessed Jesus performed, and thereby manifested his divine power and sacred mission, was at a marriage feast; and so far from censuring the conviviality of such a meeting, he turns the water into wine, that a fresh supply might be afforded to carry on the festivity. This forbids not the cheerfulness that reigns at a feast; on the contrary, it shews there is no sin in any entertainment, provided the bounds of temperance are preserved. Besides, our Lord in no one instance refused any invitation given him even on the Sabbath-day: and no one will surely assert he went for the sake of feasting, or to encourage

intemperance His motive was to shew his disciples, that these meetings had his approbation, as his presence at them testified. He, therefore, never reprovèd the donor of them, but always took occasion to deliver some important doctrine, necessary for the salvation of the souls of those who sat at meat with him; which he often illustrated by some striking parable, or confirmed his authority as a divine lawgiver, by some eminent miracle. The only instance that can bear the construction of a reproof, is, when he was invited by one of the chief Pharisees, he gives the following advice, on observing that pride and ostentation were the motives of the donor's entertainment, and that he expected to be treated as voluptuously in return:—

“ When thou makest a dinner or a supper, says he,  
“ call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy  
“ kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours, lest they also  
“ bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee:  
“ but when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the  
“ maimed, the lame, and the blind, and thou shalt  
“ be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee, but  
“ thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of  
“ the just.”

This advice was necessary to one whose motives were vanity and parade; and who thought not of the distresses of those who might have been made comfortable with the waste that prevails at the banquet of luxury and extravagance. Our Saviour condemns not his entertaining his friends, his brethren, his kinsmen, or his rich neighbours, but his motive in expecting a return, which certainly destroyed the generosity of the feast: but if he meant his entertainments in future to be truly hospitable, he advises him rather to invite such distressed objects as the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, who could not make him any return, but promises him a far better recompense at the resurrection. That our Saviour really meant no more than this, is obvious from the parable of *Dives and Lazarus*, where the rich man is not condemned to insufferable torments on account of his riches, or for feasting his friends; but for his neglect of the unfortunate beggar who lay at his gate, tormented with a loathsome disease.

In this advice to the Pharisee, our blessed Lord, when he admonishes him to call the poor, the

maimed, the lame, and the blind, to share in the future feasts he should give; does it apparently in conformity to an ancient custom of the Jews, as we find in Nehemiah and Esther. In the former we read: "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and *send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared*: for this day is holy unto our Lord, neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." In Esther, "As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning unto a good day; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of *sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.*" Both these quotations, it is observable, relate to extraordinary festive occasions, and therefore we gather, to what kind of entertainment this branch of charity belongs: for it is necessary to distinguish between a feast made on any joyful occasion, and those friendly meetings, where nothing more is intended but the entertaining a select number of friends. It is, therefore, from the former, principally, that

our bounty is expected to flow to the poor and needy; on account of the superfluity that usually reigns at such feasts. When luxury and profusion preside at the board, it is not unlikely but intemperance may succeed. But if the overplus be distributed in charity, it is commendable to have a plentiful provision, as our Saviour, on such an occasion, has charged the donor to be mindful of the poor. Thus charity is an essential branch of *hospitality*: it must flow from it in streams of kindness, beyond the bountiful entertainment of the invited guests; and it will ever do so with him, whose bosom glows with sincere joy at seeing his friends cheerful around. The good man, while thus feeling the pleasure of imparting happiness, and sharing with his friends those good things of life that are to solace the hour of refreshment, extends his beneficence to all in need, in such ways, as will best relieve them under the pressure of want or misfortune.

Charity, then, as a branch of this virtue, will render our hospitable entertainments more acceptable. Indeed, from the first beginning of society,

we find the necessity of these virtues being united; and did time suffice, it would be an easy task to give reasons, why in those early days they were inseparable: nay, that in fact, the hospitality of the Old Testament, is nothing but the charity of the New. But all our present design was merely to rescue those friendly hospitable meetings from the charge cast on them, by the fanatics of the present day, as contrary to the Gospel; which, as practised amongst intimate friends and acquaintance, keep up an intercourse of civility and kindness, and preserve harmony and concord in every neighbourhood where they prevail. We are commanded in the text to “use hospitality one towards another without grudging.” St. Paul gives the same advice to the Romans. It would be strange, therefore, that there should be any sin in doing what we are enjoined. If our feasts are temperate, not extravagant—are cheerful, not riotous, we may be assured they are innocent, and will be productive of the ends designed; and if in our power, we are not to forget the poor. But this in a great measure is left to our discretion and ability: it is

sufficient we know there is no sin in those friendly meetings, and also, what will render them more acceptable to God, and more conformable to the charitable tenets of our religion, which I should hope every man will endeavour so to render them; whose riches or opulence furnish him with the means to provide such entertainments, that "*portions may be sent unto them for whom nothing is prepared.*"

In order to shew us, that there is no such a thing as real felicity in this life, the very best connexions that virtue sanctions, are attended with vexations and disappointments: we can, therefore, scarcely hope that these friendly meetings will always answer their intention. The dispositions of men are so various, and at times so very changeable, that he who least intends an interruption, may perhaps be the first to disturb their tranquillity. You should, therefore, my brethren! make every allowance for each others uncertainty of temper. Be tender over the frailties of your neighbours, and preserve the harmony that ought to dwell in those circles, to which a man devotes his hours of relax-

ation, in order to unbend his mind, and to relieve himself from the usual cares of business or family economy:—mutually assist each other with advice and counsel, and promote that cheerfulness, which is necessary for the health and spirits of all. The man that is truly friendly and hospitable, is ever of a benevolent turn: and as his acts of liberality are dealt with an unsparing hand amongst his intimate friends, so his charity is unlimited, and prompts him to extend his beneficence to all in need, and to impart to others a portion of that happiness he feels from a mind at peace with God, and with the world around. *Amen.*

## SERMON VI.



JEREMIAH VIII. 12.

*They were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush.*

THE prophet, in these words, is speaking of the hardness of heart and impenitency of the Jews: and I fear, that with equal truth, they may be applied to many amongst us; whose boldness and effrontery in the ways of wickedness, are arrived to such a pitch, that they long since have lost that innate sense of *modesty*, which characterizes youth, ere truth and innocence have fled from the bosom, at the influence of bad example and pernicious counsel.

*Modesty* is ever amiable:—in youth it is so attractive, that although we expect to find it;

it seldom fails to win every one to its favour who is not utterly depraved. It is always a certain proof of merit, and cannot hide its native purity and worth: humility, gentleness, and kindness are ever its attendants: it is constantly studious to oblige, and is never so happy as when it can promote the felicity of others.

Before the opening mind expands to those ideas which are implanted in us by the wise Author of nature, to carry on the purposes of creation; the beauty and loveliness of this virtue consists in its innocence: all its actions display an irresistible charm that calls forth admiration and delight: and even, afterwards, it is with good men the season which more than ever requires protection and watchfulness, to preserve it from the contagion of evil counsel and example. Alas! the passions at that critical age, unless speedily and strictly guarded, are too prone to fall into the ways of sin; and if not watched with the utmost circumspection, will soon yield to the torrent, and flow with the stream; till at last, the charm of innocence being gone, and *modesty*, which could suffuse the cheek, being

stified, they become so bold in sin, as to have forgot to blush; and if any shame remain, it is, that they cannot equal their companions in vice, in all the headlong courses of licentiousness.

It is not alone the viciousness of companions chosen in the precipitancy of unguarded youth; but the too incautious discourse of unthinking age, that destroys their innocence; who, as if the unbridled restraint which they once gave to their vicious passions, was something deserving of applause and admiration, will with seeming delight and secret satisfaction, run over the deeds of intemperance and debauchery within the hearing of youth. Inexcusable are they, and much have they to answer for, who thus heedlessly corrupt the opening mind: in the day of final retribution, it will be found a considerable aggravation of their own sin. This is one of the effects of that proverb quoted by St. Paul, that "evil communications corrupt good manners." To communicate evil to youth is dangerous, and never can be innocent, as the consequences it may have, may be dreadful. The knowledge of evil of any kind should be

kept from youth, because they are not only prone to imitate, but will esteem that to be praiseworthy, which they hear an elder than themselves boast of having committed: for emulation with them is as keen as any other appetite. You, who are parents, should here particularly step forward: besides ruling your own tongues, you should be ready with your advice and influence, to teach them to judge aright; and point out to them the viciousness of a deed, though blazoned forth with all the apparent ease of unblushing age. Yourselves, I repeat, must beware of running into the same error. Be cautious of saying any thing that may corrupt their innocence. The passions, which nature has given them, then raging with all their violence, will inform their susceptible minds, without your being the monitor, to what they prompt. Then let it be your care to furnish their minds with that steady and inflexible principle of virtue, as that they may keep within the bounds of reason—the laws of God, and the duties of men.

Well doth the Apostle advise—“ Let no corrupt  
“ communications come out of your mouth, but

“ that which is good to the use of edifying, that it “ may minister grace to the hearers.” This advice is worthy to be observed, and in no case more so, than with regard to youth. If we discourse on topics in their hearing, that open no new channels for the indulgence of their passions, nor any unlawful mode of gratifying them, we act, at least, well: but if, by our conversation, we can lead them to a proper command of themselves, and by our manners shew them that cheerfulness and good humour, nay, that pleasure is compatible with their age, and instruct them that it can only be obtained by the practice of virtue, and enjoyed with any satisfaction by the preservation of the mind, pure and uncorrupt, we fulfil our duty to them. It is merely for the want of doing this, that we see so many youth of both sexes, so soon throw aside all restraint—give loose to the passions, and this barrier of chastity once broken down, rush impetuously into all the scenes of riot and debauchery. Youth, before it has received a bias that causes it to fly off from its proper course, is ever open, candid, and sincere; and therefore may as

soon be led to virtue by the hand of prudence and wisdom, as it is too often led to vice by the unremitting zeal of the wicked and licentious, who think it "strange" that every young man "runs not with them to the same excess of riot."

When youth is once launched into the depths of vice and debauchery, every thing that wears the semblance of *modesty* in their former companions is openly derided; and that innocence which suffuses the countenance with a blush, is now turned into ridicule. They become, in their turn, the panders of vice, and strive to make converts by avowedly laughing at every thing serious: and who is there among youth, in particular, that can stand the butt of ridicule? This is the successful weapon of the profligate, by which they put to flight all the remains of *modesty*. Thus they have recourse to the same arts, by which they themselves were cozened of their virtue, and lost to all sense of shame; he that blushes least, is praised the most.

In no respect whatever is modesty without its admirers and protectors. It has such inherent

beauty that it insensibly draws our esteem; and what we esteem we are ready to defend. Observe the youth—frank, generous, and sincere, when all around him, like his own bosom, appears in the alluring garb of undissembled innocence. Gay, spirited, and volatile, he seems to tread on air; and he enters into every amusement with the keenest ardour:—impatient of controul, scarce can the warnings of his better reason, restrain the impetuosity with which he rushes towards those pleasures nature has placed before him, with all the fire of youth. Ah! who shall inform him that excess of pleasure infallibly produces excess of pain, and ends in disappointment? Who shall check his pursuit of a phantom, that as soon as obtained, changes to a hideous spectre? Surely it calls for the experience of riper age to point out to him in time, that excess in any indulgence is vice, and must terminate in misery; lest from pleasure too freely tasted beyond the bounds of reason and of virtue, the youth once innocent is lost in sensuality and voluptuousness. How deplorable! how lamentable the consideration, that a youth who.

might have proved the delight of his friends and an ornament to society, sunk in debauchery; and becoming what is most dreadful—the cause of vice in others. Who would not then step forward—by advice—by example—and if a parent, by wholesome correction, prevent the utter ruin of a youth, ere he has lost the power of feeling the blush of innocence glow on the cheek?

In either sex, never can genuine *modesty* fail of engaging the esteem of all good men; but in the contrary sex it is almost universally certain to obtain it, for spotless innocence and unaffected *modesty* in them, have a natural claim to protection from us. Speak ye, who love to see virtue in her most amiable appearance; does not she wear the most captivating form, when we behold her adorning the meek-eyed virgin, whose countenance speaks innate purity and rectitude of thought? Sure I am, that to seduce her from the paths of *modesty*, and to taint her uncorrupt mind with unchaste principles, is a crime of the most atrocious nature. Far be it from me to wield the bolts of heaven, and to direct where its just vengeance

ought to fall: but all will allow, who have any just sense of the laws of God and man, that to seduce the innocence of that sex, who claim our protection, is a crime of so black a hue, as will not fail to draw down some adequate punishment from a God of justice, whose declarations from ancient time, against the least tendency to this sin, are positive, plain, and intelligible.

If you wish for an instance of God's special protection of this virtue, read the history of Joseph—a story as pathetic as ever adorned the page of history. The favourite of his father, he became the object of hatred to his brethren; and with all the ingenuous candour of a youth of sixteen, he relates to them a dream which indicated his future greatness:—"Hear, I pray you," says he, unconscious of any ill—"hear the dream which I have dreamed. For behold we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and behold your sheaves stood round about and made obeisance to my sheaf." Though the youth, in the fulness of his heart, when he disclosed to them what he judged to be only a

common dream, intended no insult, as perhaps seeing nothing indicative of any future greatness to be derived from it, yet his brethren thought otherwise:—"Shalt thou, indeed," say they, with a contemptuous sneer, as provoked at his future superiority over them, which his dream seemed to presage—"Shalt thou indeed reign over us? Shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dream and for his words."

Notwithstanding this, Joseph was incapable of supposing any malice to lurk in the heart of his brethren: for when his father sent him to "see whether it was well with them and with their flocks," with what readiness and cheerfulness does he fly to the valley of Hebron, to Shechem! and when he finds them not there, how anxiously does he wander from field to field; till learning they were gone to Dothan, he hastes to seek them there! Perceiving them at a distance, his honest heart exults that he was the messenger of a kind enquiry from his father, of their health and the welfare of their flocks. But on the contrary,

“when they saw him afar off, even before he came  
“near unto them, they conspired against him to  
“slay him. And they said one to another; behold  
“this dreamer cometh, come now therefore let us  
“slay and cast him into some pit, and we will say  
“some evil beast hath devoured him, and we shall  
“see what will become of his dreams.”

Reuben, the eldest, alone at first opposed the putting him to death; and proposed the casting him alive into the pit, intending afterwards to deliver him: on the edge whereof, with all the unconcern, that their cruelty, obduracy of heart, and their inveterate malice could suggest—deaf to his cries and unchecked as yet by conscience, they sat down to satisfy that hunger of which the whilst they had doomed their innocent brother to die: till seeing a company of Ishmeelites coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spicery, balm, and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt; Judah, in the haste with which the proposal to slay his brother had been made, seems to have been surprised into an assent at first, now relents, and proposed to sell Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty

pieces of silver, which being done, Joseph was carried into Egypt.

Here mark the wonderous ways of the Almighty! Man's sin at the first produced evil, and God from that very evil caused every thing in the end to turn to his benefit; and it is so he acts in the common affairs of the world. When men suffer from persecution, malice, or envy, God renders it ultimately advantageous to the sufferer, and either defeats the evil designs of the malicious, or turns them upon themselves: thus in the case before us—whilst Joseph's brethren, with a cool premeditated design, either by death or slavery, intended for ever to frustrate the accomplishment of his dreams; God caused the very ill they designed him, to be the foundation of his future advancement, and that superiority over them, which they so much dreaded, by making the events to follow in such succession, that he rose to such a pre-eminence as fulfilled his dream in every respect.

The dream, in all probability, was nothing more than ordinary, and had no signification, till their fears gave it an imaginary importance, as indicating

in their opinion, a future superiority over them; they therefore took the cruel step they did to prevent it: on which God, to punish them, causes their own act to bring about what they feared, and thus turns the evil upon themselves, to shew his governance in the affairs of men; his vindication and protection of innocence; and to give them a lesson in those early ages, of the noble forgiveness of injuries.

Joseph being again sold by the Ishmeelites to Potiphar, captain of the guard to Pharoah, we have a noble instance of the *modesty* of the youth resisting the pressing solicitations of the wife of his master:—"How," exclaims the pious Joseph, "how can I do this great wickedness and sin "against God!" As he abhorred the idea of committing an offence against Heaven; Providence protects him in an especial manner through his imprisonment of fourteen years, to which he was confined by the false accusation of his mistress. While he was in prison, by the interpretation of two dreams of the chief butler and baker of the king's household, he comes at length to be intro-

duced into the royal presence, being now thirty years of age;—when he gave such a proof of both wisdom and foresight, in the explanation of this monarch's dream, prognostic of a future famine, at the expiration of seven years of plenty, as struck the king with admiration of such extraordinary talents:—"Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all  
" this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou  
" art. Thou shalt be over my house, and accord-  
" ing to thy word shall all my people be ruled:  
" only in the throne will I be greater than thou.  
" See," continues the monarch, "see I have set thee  
" over all the land of Egypt."

"And Pharoah took off his ring from his hand,  
" and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him  
" in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain  
" about his neck. And he made him to ride in his  
" second chariot which he had, and they cried be-  
" fore him—bow the knee."

Joseph, in his exaltation to this dignity, proved himself worthy of the honour Pharoah bestowed upon him, and through the seven years of plenty, laid up such a quantity of corn in storehouses

throughout the land, against the seven years of famine, that were then to succeed, according to the dream of the king; insomuch that the neighbouring nations, to which the scarcity extended, were supplied with corn from Egypt; amongst the rest the land of Canaan, which caused Jacob to send down Joseph's brethren, excepting Benjamin, to purchase corn.

Twenty-two years had passed over since they sold their brother to the Ishmeelites; consequently his age being now thirty-eight, the habit he wore, and his speaking to them by an interpreter, totally prevented their recollection of him. "And Joseph was governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth."

"Shalt thou indeed reign over us?—Shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?"—Might Joseph have justly retorted on them at this moment, for he knew them at first sight, and therefore must be instantly struck with the accomplishment of his dream, on seeing his brethren bowing down them-

selves before him:—" His sheaf arose and stood  
" upright, and their sheaves stood round about and  
" made obeisance to his sheaf." But he had no-  
thing malignant in his disposition, nor would his  
feelings at the sight of his brethren, permit him to  
harbour the least ill-will against them, notwith-  
standing the cruel treatment he had received from  
them. Yet, not seeing his brother Benjamin, he  
feared they might have acted in a similar manner  
to him, he would not, therefore, give way to his  
feelings, but assumed an air of roughness, and  
treated them as spies:—" Nay, but to see the na-  
" kedness of the land you are come. By the life  
" of Pharoah ye shall not go forth hence, except  
" your youngest brother come hither; send one of  
" you and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall  
" be kept in prison, that your words may be pro-  
" ved, whether there be any truth in you."

After keeping them three days in prison, he dis-  
missed them all but Simeon, with positive injunc-  
tions not to return without their other brother.  
Their present distress brought to their recollection  
their former cruel usage of Joseph, when he

pleaded and could not be heard, when struck with remorse, as their consciences told them the hand of God was inflicting on them a just retribution for their unfeeling conduct towards him:—"We are  
" verily guilty, said they among themselves, con-  
" cerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish  
" of his soul, when he besought us and we would  
" not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.  
" And Reuben answered them, saying, spake I not  
" unto you—do not sin against the child, and ye  
" would not hear? Therefore behold also his blood  
" is required."

The heart of Joseph was too tender not to be sensibly hurt on hearing these self-accusing reflections, which spoke the voice of conscience had begun to torment them with its stinging reproaches; he therefore turned himself from them and shed tears.

His brethren being obliged to leave Simeon with him, returned to Canaan. Joseph having ordered their money to be put into their sacks, furnished them also with provisions for the way. Being arrived, they informed their father of all that had be-

fallen them in Egypt, who at first refused to let Benjamin go, but at last, at the earnest entreaty of Judah, he reluctantly consents: and when pressed by necessity again to send to Egypt, for a fresh supply of corn, Benjamin departed with them.

When they arrived in Egypt and presented themselves before Joseph; again did they bow themselves before him to the earth; “ And he asked “ them of their welfare, and said, is your father “ well? The old man of whom ye spake, is he yet “ alive? And they answered—thy servant our fa- “ ther is in good health; he is yet alive: and they “ bowed down their heads and made obeisance. “ And he lift up his eyes and saw his brother Ben- “ jamin, his mother’s son, and said—is this your “ younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? “ And he said, God be gracious unto thee my son. “ And Joseph made haste, for his bowels did yearn “ upon his brother, and he sought where to weep, “ and he entered into his chamber and wept there.

Joseph having adopted a plan which he had devised in order to get Benjamin into his own protection, ordered his cup to be put into his sack:

and after they were departed, he dispatched his steward to accuse them of having stolen it, which, on search, being found in Benjamin's sack; in confusion at the unexpected discovery they hasted back, and fell prostrate to the earth before Joseph, and offered to become his bondmen, when in seeming anger, he accused them of the theft, but proposed that he alone on whom the cup was found, should stay behind and be his servant;—when Judah pressed forward, and in the most pathetic language a feeling heart could suggest, on such an occasion;—and with such an affecting simplicity, pleaded the distress which his father would feel for the detention of Benjamin; accompanied with all the earnestness of real grief, that Joseph, who knew the truth of all he uttered, could no longer refrain; but after having caused all but his brethren to leave his presence, he burst into tears, and confessed himself their brother—that brother, of the injury to whom done, he had heard their repentance, and whose supposed death their father had so long lamented:—“ I am Joseph—doth my  
“ father yet live? Come near to me I pray you;

“ I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into  
“ Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved nor angry  
“ with yourselves that ye sold me hither, for God  
“ did send me before you to preserve life.”

This amiable forgiving disposition continued with Joseph throughout his whole life; and indeed every virtue that can adorn the human mind was conspicuous in him, and had its origin in that very virtue of which we have treated in the former part of this discourse—in that modesty, amiable in youth, and no less prepossessing in riper age. Modesty is not alone opposed to unchastity or indecency: no! it is the foundation of every thing that is lovely in the character of man: from this source spring meekness, humility, patience, fortitude, and forgiveness of injuries. It by no means is to be reckoned amongst the weaknesses of the human mind. Bashfulness and timidity, though they may accompany this virtue, are not the criterion by which we form our estimation of it, for when real, it stands forth the foundation pillar on which every manly virtue is to be raised.

Let a youth, whose mind is untainted with

ideas, repugnant to delicacy, and possessed of no other sentiments but those of his duty to God and all mankind, be taught in early youth a proper knowledge of himself, and to have just respect to his own importance. In all things relative to his conduct in life, guard him with the best admonitions and example from evil and degrading company; and you will see him become that character which, while it possesses a manly firmness, and acts with decision in all the affairs of life—with honour and integrity to mankind, and with conscious dignity as a man and a christian; he yet, in consequence of that inherent modesty first implanted by nature and improved by education, becomes eminent in meekness, affability, humility, condescension, and every virtue that can adorn and dignify human nature.

But from the history of Joseph we learn not only to admire those virtues that accompanied the genuine modesty of his nature, but we have a lesson presented to us in the remorse of his brethren, who, although they were not ashamed to invent a falsehood to deceive their father, but with a steady

unblushing countenance, presented to him Joseph's coat of many colours, stained with the blood of a kid:—"This have we found," say they, "and know not whether it be thy son's coat or no." Yet, after a lapse of twenty-two years, no sooner did a little unexpected hard usage befall them in a strange land, when their dread of imprisonment, and of the power of the ruler over all the land of Egypt, so acted upon their fears, that recollection and compunction came at the same moment, and conscience eloquently told them their cruelty to their brother, had at last found its keenest avenger.

Conscience is no more than that innate sense of right and wrong, with which the mind is at first impressed; and which is endowed with such perceptive qualities as to be able to discern the justice or injustice of any act by intuition. It acts as the vicegerent of God, and gives to man happiness or misery in this world, as his deeds shall be good or otherwise: and it confirms these two inevitable portions of human life, by an assurance of what we have to expect in the world that is to succeed this. When this innate sense of what is right, is

guided by the light of the revealed will of God; and education prompts the youth to persevere in the path which religion has pointed out—to chuse the right and avoid the wrong; then will the modesty of that tender age, when maturity bursts on the youth, come forth with her attendant graces; and strong in virtue and fortified by religion, no temptations will be able to lure from the paths of righteousness; but steady and inflexible he will pursue his course in all the ways of God's commandments.

How necessary then to give the early minds of youth proper ideas of discerning the right or wrong of actions. For though the innate properties of the mind be inclinable to the impressions of what is good; yet for want of due care, it too often receives impressions of the reverse, as no time is able to efface. The youth soon learns to deviate from the paths of virtue; and one false step so succeeds another, that he who once could blush at the commission of an ill, soon becomes so bold in sin as to despise that shame, which prevented him from an earlier acquaintance with vice and folly—a state

surely to be dreaded and carefully avoided. In the gaiety of youth, the dictates of our better judgment are unheeded, but should any distress come upon us, our internal monitor will begin its bitter reproaches; and too late, it will be found, that to have preserved the modesty of early youth, and to have cultivated the virtues to which she naturally leads, would have led to such a tranquillity of mind, as not all the evils of life combined could ever long disturb. But should no distress accompany us through life, sufficient to call up this avenger to her office, yet, at that hour when we are laid on the bed of sickness, and death has set all the terrors of God in array against us, conscience will then take ample amends for the long suppression of her many warnings, and will redouble all the torments a sinner must expect to feel in another world, for his having not listened to her dictates in this.

Let youth then be firmly persuaded, that the surest method to prevent this self-accusing monitor from exercising her delegated authority as a reprover of sin; is never to lose sight of that modesty

which is the most amiable ornament of youth. Confine not then this virtue to the deeds of incontinence, but consider it, as it really is, the very foundation on which all the other virtues are raised. She is the first quality we perceive in the dawn of youth; when infancy is departed, and the intellect begins to promise every thing that is beautiful and engaging in that tender age.

Never, O young men! never lose sight of that regard due to yourselves; and be assured, that however this virtue of modesty may be derided when you come forth into life; as it was implanted in the mind by the God who created you, and in that creation designed your felicity; so will it infallibly produce those joys that flow from a mind pure and uncontaminated with loose and vicious propensities. Every amiable virtue which your religion recommends, is in her train, and will reflect lustre on your conduct through life, and if the happiness of your minds be at all your aim, she will not fail to lead you to its permanent attainment.

The wise Solomon has given many important lessons to youth; but in one place it is worthy of

remark, with what unlimited freedom, he seemingly allows him the full scope of his inclination; then checks his career with a solemn memento that cannot be too often, or too deeply impressed upon youth:—"Rejoice, O young man! in thy youth; and let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth—and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes—but know thou for all these things—*God will bring thee to judgment.*"

## SERMON VII.



JOB VI. 8, 9.

*O that I might have my request, and that God would grant me the thing that I long for!—even that it would please God to destroy me:—that he would let loose his hand and cut me off!*

**I**N the most distressing afflictions that can happen to the children of men, we find real grief powerfully persuasive. The tenderest feelings of humanity being then painfully wounded, the labouring mind dictates the most pathetic language; and our sensibility is affected by the recital of the genuine story of undissembled sorrow. There is in real grief certain emotions which cannot be feigned, and which irresistably attract our pity; and the tears we shed, as flowing from the purest compassion, seldom fail to give consolation where they cannot relieve.

The manifold afflictions of the patient Job have suggested the most affecting sentiments that ever melted the sympathetic breast of man. Suffering every calamity from the loss of all his substance that poverty could inflict; and sustaining the deprivation of all his children at the same time; we feel our minds impressed with melancholy on reading the exclamations of his poignant woe: and led by every generous impulse, we are involuntarily disposed to pity his accumulated sorrows. In his answer to Eliphaz, the Temanite, who had been declaring to him the happy end of God's correction, Job shews his complaints are not groundless; and in the text he anxiously wishes for death, wherein he is assured of comfort, as there would then be a period to all his grievous afflictions: "O that I might have my request, and that God  
" would grant me the thing that I long for!—even  
" that it would please God to destroy me:—that he  
" would let loose his hand and cut me off!"

Death indeed is the termination of the sufferings of human nature, and therefore as such it is desirable to the man in affliction. In Job, we perceive,

a wish for it may be innocently indulged, for doubtless it is natural to pray for an event which alone can put a period to our sorrows, when hope cannot afford sufficient grounds for their being terminated by any other means. Nor do the lamentations of grief, nor the wish for death, indicate despair, or imply a doubt of the goodness of God, only when carried to excess, and the means to arouse ourselves from the midst of sufferings are in our power; they then become criminal, as they evince an impatience inconsistent with the christian duty of resignation.

It is natural for the afflicted to suppose their own sorrows are justifiable, on the ground of the extraordinary degree of their calamity; and indeed some afflictions are so truly lamentable, as to defy the power of friendly consolation, as in the case of Job, whose complicated distresses, brought on by a sad train of rapid and unforeseen events, ought to have inspired commiseration in his officious friends, instead of the harshness of unfeeling reproach. How earnestly does he implore their forbearance of such cruelty! "Have pity on me

“have pity on me, O ye my friends, for the hand  
“of the Lord hath touched me!”

When therefore our afflictions, like his, are not of our own bringing on, but proceed from accidental circumstances, as the loss of friends taken from us by death; it is then the solitary mourner, in deep distress, and in all the agony of woe, sees no consolation but in that event which shall bring him to the friends he has lost, and for whom he goes mourning all the days of his pilgrimage on earth. In vain the endeavour, too often, in such deplorable instances, for the real friends to pour in the balm of consolation, or to recommend the supporting aid of religion, when affliction thus presses hard and weighs down the spirits! They have frequently the melancholy prospect of seeing extreme grief hasten on a rapid decline, and no repose to the sorrows of the afflicted, but in the approach of death, in whose cold arms every woe that pierced the heart is buried in eternal silence and oblivion. It is the wish of nature—it is the soul having lost its partner, anxiously longs for that stroke, when it shall please God to unite them again, disencum-

bered of all earthly affections; and where a felicity shall await them incomprehensible to those ideas, which, in our present state, must ever fall short of the comprehension of those celestial joys, which are pure, refined, and spiritual.

But yet, from whatever cause it may proceed, hopeless sorrow is ever culpable. Had Job done more than utter the natural complaints of woe, and testified an impatience under the severe sufferings with which it pleased God to afflict him;—well had he merited the reproaches of his friends, and never would he have been handed down to us as a pattern of patience and submission to the will of God: but it is testified of him after his accumulated distresses at the close of the first chapter—“In all this, Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” Nor must we! though suffering under the rod of heavy chastisement, and labouring under the most grievous calamities that can befall us. We may vent our complaints in language that speaks our sufferings, and vindicate ourselves from the reproaches of pretended friends, when conscious no fault of our own produced them: and if we have

but that sense of our immortality as formed to live again after death, which Job signified in these words: "I know that my Redeemer liveth and that  
" he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:  
" and though after my skin worms destroy this body,  
" yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall  
" see for myself and mine eyes shall behold and not  
" another." We shall *then* reap a consolation which, in the midst of all our sufferings, will prompt us to patience and resignation, even whilst our afflictions cause us to vent our complaints in all the bitterness of woe.

But should our sorrows get the better of our reason, and despair seize on our oppressed minds, the indulgence of grief would be highly criminal, as it would indicate an impatience under the discipline of the Almighty: yet afflictions debar us not from justifying ourselves, nor from uttering our complaints; provided that these complaints and that justification are subservient to our trust in God. "Though he slay me," says Job, "yet will I trust  
" in him, but I will maintain my own ways before  
" him." And surely if Job could confide in the

Almighty when the light shone dimly on the path of immortality, and with conscious firmness could urge the uprightness of his ways before him; we, who are blessed with the glorious effulgence of the Gospel to guide our steps, have much more reason to place our confidence in a Being, whose goodness inclined him to send his Son, by whose example, we may preserve that steady path of conscious rectitude, that will lead us to life and bliss eternal.

The grand consolation to the afflicted, who have been deprived of their friends by death, is the hope of enjoying their society again in the next world. This christianity alone can yield its followers, and the expectation thereof, fills the mind at the last hour with the most soothing ideas, and inspires a resignation becoming that awful moment. Formed as we are with dispositions that incline to friendship; when the heart meets with another disposed to return a reciprocal passion, and glows with an equal esteem; a mutual connexion is formed on the basis of a pure and virtuous affection, sanctioned by the laws of God and man, which holds till death dissolves the tender tie. It is then we look to the

hope which our religion inspires, and in these words of our divine Redeemer, find an assurance that we shall meet those friends again whom we loved on earth. He prays for it with that fervour which constantly marked his love for his disciples: —“ Father, I will that they also whom thou hast  
“ given me be with me where I am, that they may  
“ behold my glory which thou hast given me, for  
“ thou lovedst me before the foundation of the  
“ world.”

Attracted by the hope of meeting again the friends whom we loved on earth, either from the ties of nature or affection, we are excited to a life of goodness and virtue, that “ where he is we may  
“ be also.” Animated by this hope, afflictions of every kind must lose their sting. Adversity cannot deprive us of the fond idea that a consciousness of living so as to merit the bliss of meeting again in heaven our departed friends, must inspire, even though wandering in the gloomy vale of misery while on earth. Poverty, sickness, loss of friends, and every calamity of life, what are they? Life is short even at the longest, and soon, very soon, we

shall hail the stroke of death, that not only puts a final period to the distresses of humanity, but introduces us to all our friends and relatives, who have only gone a few years before from this world of sorrow and distress, to the place where true joys are only to be found.

Job, whose extraordinary patience under all his afflictions, obtained him even in this life, as much again as he had lost, is a proof that exemplary submission under the chastisements with which God may see it just to correct us, may be compensated here on earth with a return of those blessings, of which we have been deprived; provided no despair nor impatience under our loss of friends, or the perishable goods of this life, rob us of the divine virtue of resignation. Those very friends we have lost cannot be restored to us, nor indeed ought we to wish it; but it may please God to raise up others to fill up the vacancy we feel—compose our wounded spirits, and supply us with consolation: if not, it may be that God has removed them from us, because our affections were too much engaged to the objects of their attachment. In order, therefore,

that our wishes and our prayers may extend to the place, to which we hope for their good deeds, God will receive them; and by knowing what we must do to regain their society, we may be induced to follow the blessed footsteps of our Saviour and Guide, who alone can bring us to where we shall participate in the like felicity. This then is a new light, by which the gracious goodness of God throws a ray of divine consolation into our bosoms. How rapturous the idea of his benevolent design in removing our friends, to lead us by the hopes of being re-united to them in bliss; to those deeds of virtue and piety, his blessed Son has taught us will obtain our most sanguine wishes.

To despair, or to give way to a violence of grief, is, in any case, very wrong, as it doubts the goodness of a propitious Deity, whose delight is to behold us happy; and who takes away our dearest friends from a world of misery to attract our thoughts to those heavenly mansions, where we shall hereafter united join in all the praises of that Being, who to the sons and daughters of affliction, has ever shewn himself a God of consolation.

Death, then, we see is not only a refuge for the distressed—a certain period to the attendant afflictions of human nature; but it is also the means to bring us to all those, who have already fallen victims to his friendly dart: we should therefore lay aside those terrors, that cause us to regard it in a different light, and never consider its approach in any vicissitude of life, prosperous or adverse, but as a friend: thus did Job when he prayed so earnestly for it in the words of the text: “O that  
“I might have my request—that God would grant  
“me the thing that I long for!—even that it would  
“please God to destroy me, that he would let loose  
“his hand and cut me off!”

In every affliction, let not the mourner with impatience murmur and repine at the dispensations of Heaven, because God has removed some of the friends he loved; but let him submit and suppress the overflowings of unavailing grief. Let him be assured that if he copy the patience of Job; though he cannot, nor is it required that he should totally abstain from the complaining language of distress: yet if he strive to overcome his grief by exerting

himself; calling the powers of reason to his aid, and putting his confidence in God, he will find his sorrows gradually subside into a calm acquiescence, and a fond remembrance of the friends he has lost: and soothed by the hope of meeting them in a world where sorrow is not known, he will pursue the course pointed out to him by his God and Saviour, till he himself arrives at the destined end of his pilgrimage on earth.

Why should we mourn our loss in our friends being summoned from a world, in which we find no permanent satisfaction in any thing we enjoy? Would you have them again run the same round of cares, troubles, and vexations, merely because you have found their friendship or affection essential to your present felicity? Surely your grief flows from a motive of selfishness! You mourn their loss because you fancy their society only wanting to give you a relish for your other enjoyments: but God, to undeceive you, has removed them from your attachment, in order to shew you how frail all worldly connexions are; and to induce you to place your affection on things above—on

those everlasting treasures your fond partiality concludes your deceased friends shall enjoy, as a reward for their goodness, and for the righteous acts you witnessed in them while on earth. If this be the case, and you judge them to merit the recompense of heaven, carry your thoughts thither! Imagine them crowned with immortality; veiled in robes of purest white; standing amidst numberless multitudes singing hosannas to the throne and unto the lamb! Reflect on this scene, and say what are all the evils of life; nay, what are all its joys, compared with what your departed friends shall for ever experience in the presence of God Most High! Banish then your grief, lest its indulgence take too much possession of you: be calm, be sober, be vigilant, and hope to the end. Let a cheerfulness becoming your christian profession, and the elevated hopes of immortality it affords, bring consolation to your bosoms. Let nothing overcome your resolution to obtain the glorious privileges of life eternal. Place your trust in the Almighty and follow the example of your Saviour; and “rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation;”

when it pleases God to call you from this world of vexation, you will meet death with a triumphant exultation of joining all your departed friends, and mingling in that vast multitude of sanctified spirits, that day and night encircle the throne of God—cast down their crowns and say—“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honour, and power; for thou hast created all things; and for thy pleasure sure they are and were created.”

## SERMON VIII.\*



HEBREWS XIII. 1.

*Let brotherly love continue.*

THAT love which we owe to one another is called *brotherly*, because we are all the adopted children of one and the same Almighty Father, by whom we were created and are preserved; and wheresoever we dwell on the surface of the earth, we are but as one family. This consideration should instigate us to every thing that is sincere and disinterested in our conduct with all mankind, however remotely situated; but particularly with those residing more immediately near us, with whom, consequently, we are obliged to be connected by that mutual want we feel for each others assistance in

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\*A Benefit-Club Sermon.

the common affairs of life. But mankind are seldom disposed to think any man has a claim to sincerity and disinterestedness, especially if a stranger. This is owing to that narrow principle of selfishness which has crept into the bosoms of the men of the world, who consider every man with whom they are not acquainted, as one that ought not to be trusted till better known: hence caution and worldly prudence detract from the merit of our best actions, by preventing us from being open and candid in our dealings one with another. If we mean honestly and are sincere ourselves, why should we be doubtful of others? This is assuredly not to observe that excellent moral precept of our Saviour's—of doing to others as we wish they should do unto us. We naturally expect all men to be sincere in their dealings with us; and yet in ours with them we are cautious and distrustful. The world indeed is become such, that he who would act according to those principles which coincide with his duties to God and man, is so often deceived in his expectation of meeting the like return, that he finds the necessity of being equally circum-

spect; and becomes himself that suspicious distrustful character he before condemned. But in our transactions with those with whom we cannot but be in habits of intimacy or acquaintance; and in whom, from our general knowledge of their characters, we can hardly be deceived, it is certainly our interest, as well as our duty, to promote mutual good will and assistance; and to exchange those offices of kindness which shall advance that degree of comfort and convenience, which we delight to enjoy in whatever rank we are placed; and which, if they do not amount to what the apostle advises, are at least commendable.

Men who are in such situations in life, holding that rank and superiority which property gives over the common class of individuals, have no need of establishing any resource against the trying hour of sickness, but against which, when it does come, they can provide without injury to themselves or families. For though they are equally liable to the common disorders attendant on our nature; yet they can amply repay all those whose help they require in that extremity, by an ade-

quate compensation. But it is different with that class of people who form by far the greater bulk of mankind—the labourer, the mechanic, and the artificer: as they can but ill spare so much from their earnings, as to remunerate those whose advice and assistance is necessary; it is therefore highly judicious to club a certain portion of their industry to form a general fund against the hour of calamity.

It is not only the view to their own future benefit, by which the members of a society formed for this purpose ought to be influenced; but they ought also to be guided by a principle of *brotherly love*, that shews itself in a cheerful willingness to have the produce of their own labour appropriated for the assistance of their brother members, during the hour of need. And their duty is still further, to live in that harmony and concord as shall preserve the credit of their society; and by observing its laws, as they tend to promote the general peace and welfare of the community, will lay the foundation of that good character which is essentially necessary for them to hold in the opinion of mankind: to be careless of which argues a depraved

and corrupt mind. If they are desirous of the good will of all to whom they look with any degree of respect; and from whom they wish for countenance and support in their respective callings, they will be industrious, sober, and frugal. But they cannot with any degree of propriety expect this, if they are wanting in the preservation of that strict attention to their moral conduct, as can alone ensure them the protection and patronage of all above them. A man may be independent in his circumstances; but he ought never to consider himself independent of the good opinion of men in general, however he may be regardless of that of the prejudiced and malicious.

There is ingrafted in us a wish to please and to be found agreeable by all; as well as a motive to preserve our own approbation, by maintaining that respect and veneration for ourselves, which will prevent us from doing an act disgraceful or beneath us: and though this desire is commendable, yet we are never to descend so servilely low, as to follow the vicious customs of the world: by so doing we should infallibly lose that esteem we are anxious

to obtain. There is nothing in nature so opposite as the opinions and conduct of men in general; and when I recommend a regard to be paid to the former, it is because all men have proper notions of what is just and right, though they may not have either the principle or integrity to act up to their sentiments at all times and upon all occasions.

When a man preserves that self-esteem which his inward sense of what is just will lead him to do; he will discern the path he ought to pursue, and will guide his footsteps by those unerring rules his religion prescribes; for by no other means can he obtain that peace of mind, which flows from a consciousness of acting in conformity to the laws of God and man:—always preserving that brotherly kindness which is required of him as an individual among so many millions of inhabitants that dwell on the earth; with whom he ranks in the sight of God, as one of the rational creatures formed at his hands; and for whom, if he walk worthy the vocation whereunto he is called, he has reserved such blessings in a future world, as shall be his portion who worthily fills up the measure of his duty, as a man and a christian in this.

Amongst individuals who reside in any way contiguous, a link of friendship, and a bond of reciprocal obligation to promote a mutual kindness may be formed, so that *brotherly love* may continue in its full force. It is not always self-love that dictates this. Let us be so charitable as to suppose that more frequently it is that generous affection which extends to the whole human race; but which concentrates to one point where it sheds its kindness to all within the compass of its immediate knowledge. Here it exercises its goodness and delights in every office of generous love, still maintaining that universal philanthropy towards every fellow-creature on the face of the globe, as to entertain towards them a cordial wish for their felicity—the enjoyment of a religion that alone dictates such extensive benevolence—and the hope that every man in the end will “taste and see how gracious the Lord is.”

But should not a motive so noble, so disinterested, and so conformable to the precepts of our religion excite to this universal good-will; yet self-love may sometimes induce a man to perform actions of

kindness, in the expectation of obtaining a similar return; and although this motive is without doubt greatly inferior to the universal benevolence recommended by our Redeemer, yet it may prompt a man to return such kind offices as he has received from others.

But the precepts of our religion, in the most earnest manner, urge to this communication of benefits. We find it enforced by every consideration that can incite men to its practise. That disciple, beloved by our Saviour, who reclined on his bosom at supper, has enlarged more on this subject than any other of the Apostles. Distinguished from the rest in a peculiar manner, he enjoyed the friendship of his beloved master, and seems to have better known that divine love that influenced his conduct towards mankind; and which he evinced in all his words and actions: and which, therefore, St. John recommends in his first general epistle:—"God is love:" says he, "in this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him.

“Herein is love; not that we love God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

God sent his Son to redeem mankind—to wash away the guilt of sin; and after his justice was satisfied for man’s transgression, now he was restored to the divine favour; to be unto him as an example whereby he might regain that felicity for which he was designed. This is a most urgent and persuasive reason why we should love God; and if so, “this commandment,” says the Apostle, “have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.”

These societies, in a more particular manner, may be made to promote this *brotherly love* which the Apostle recommends, as they extend their benefits to many individuals who would not otherwise reap that advantage they are so well calculated to afford. By the administration of comfort in the hour of need, they suggest the melancholy truth, that as all mankind are liable to many infirmities entailed upon their nature through the

fall, and being equally with yourselves the children of the same universal parent; so are they entitled to your commiseration; and where your hands cannot be extended to succour or relieve, they may be uplifted in prayer for the mitigation of those evils, to which every child of Adam is more or less prone.

But what I would earnestly recommend is that *brotherly love*, which, while it extends and embraces all mankind with the wish for their felicity, both in this world and in the next; and is disposed to meet every man on terms of generosity and good-will, stranger though he be; yet charitably imagines no man intends deception, and as such, is entitled to openness and candour. But as the influence of your example—your words of ingenuousness and truth; and your actions of friendship and benevolence, cannot often extend beyond a certain circle round your residence: it must be within this sphere, these virtues ought to actuate and govern your whole conduct. In the humble walks of life, therefore, this *brotherly love* may be manifested in various ways—by uprightness and

integrity—by plainness and sincerity—by kindness and good-will to all with whom you have any thing to do.

Your situations in all other respects, require such duties as prove you are guided by motives, which your religion and your sense of what is just and proper dictate to you to be due to all with whom you stand connected as a relation—as a son or a brother—a husband or a parent. As a member of this society, you will of necessity see the obligation you must be under to observe its rules, as its tendency to further and advance your own benefit, is too obvious, I should suppose, to need any positive injunction to that effect. Sickness is a dreadful calamity, and you have done prudently to devote a portion of your present earnings, as a fund to which you can apply whenever it attacks you; but unless you preserve yourselves in those habits of industry, prudence, sobriety, and frugality, you will inevitably destroy the very intent for which you united yourself to a society that provides this resource: and what is most grievous to any man of feeling, it is seldom but in

your rank of life, that when you are seized by illness, every one of your family, dependent on your industry, must unavoidably suffer from a want of your labour, which perhaps is their only support.

Continue then to live in the practice of those duties that will benefit your society, and effectually promote the welfare of your respective families. *Brotherly love* comprehends your whole *duty to your neighbour*: and your *duty to God* requires your daily thanks and praise; beseeching him to reward your labours with success, and your virtues with a mind at peace with itself and with the world around. Performing then these two duties to God and your neighbour, you will not fail hereafter to be united to that blessed society in heaven, where sickness, pain, or disease no more shall prey on our corruptible bodies, which then shall become capable of enjoying all the glories of a happy immortality.

## SERMON IX.



ECCLESIASTES IX. 5.

*The living know that they shall die.*

THERE is no man, were he told in common conversation with his friends and acquaintance, that *he should die at one time or other*, but would be greatly surprised; nay, perhaps offended at the supposition of his being ignorant of an universally-acknowledged truth. The misfortune is, we live as if we did not know it. The cares or the pleasures of the world have taken such hold of our souls, that this knowledge of our mortality has no effect upon us; and yet it is a knowledge that concerns us most, and ought to live in our remembrance: it decides our destiny for eternity, whether of happiness or misery. It is well, therefore,

there are events which involuntarily bring the knowledge of our death to our minds, and fill them with those just reflections they ought at all times to entertain. The death of our friends and neighbours must have this effect; for no one, I should suppose, can witness the solemnity of a person carried to the grave, without experiencing those sentiments of his own death, which are becoming a man who knows that he shall die.

The age, indeed, at which the stroke of death may meet us is very uncertain, and on which we can have no reliance. Let us live ever so long, we still know that we must die at last; nay, that the longer we live, the nearer we approach to it. Is the death of others then the only circumstance that can bring us to reflect on our mortality? Alas! there are but small hopes that such reflections will outlive the ceremony. We daily, nay hourly, see our friends attacked with a pining sickness, that carries them to the grave at all ages: we see some cut off suddenly in infancy, in youth, and in the full strength of their age: we see others live to a good old age, and then being stricken in years,

they fade away suddenly like the grass: then “the living must know that they shall die” like them. We cannot be unacquainted with this truth; nor will any man plead ignorance of it; for he is frequently called upon to have his feelings sensibly affected with grief, by giving his attendance to place the corpse of a friend in the grave: he feels a genuine sorrow at the moment, and can drop a tear over the ashes of the dead; but then, with the grave that he leaves, his sorrow too often departs. The cares of the world soon take such possession of him, that though a tender remembrance may now and then pass over his mind, of the friends he has lost, and a hope arise that he shall hereafter be permitted to join them; yet it has not the proper effect, so as to produce that sense of his mortality which, as a christian, he ought to entertain.

It is not required to have our thoughts so intent on this subject, as to preclude those which are necessary for every man in his respective calling. As born for society, man must have those reflections which will enable him to become an useful member thereof: nay, he must have relaxations

from the labour which his profession or calling requires: but then the thoughts of his mortality will ever incite a good christian to that religious circumspection over his words and actions, as will shew he has a just sense of the importance of having an immortal spirit, that is to return to that God who gave it; for the salvation of which, although a Saviour died on the cross, in whose merits he places implicit faith; yet to prove its sincerity, he obeys the righteous mandates of that Saviour, as far as in him lies: and in his dealings with mankind, he makes the precepts of his Gospel the only standard of his actions. Well knowing that “the living they shall die,” he never prays to God, but he bewails the sins and infirmities of his nature, and strives to subdue and overcome them. Thus by a continual mortification of his unruly wills and affections, he endeavours to prevent the necessity of imploring the divine forgiveness at the awful hour of dissolution: he knows the hazard of an immortal soul is too great to be left to a death-bed repentance.

*A death-bed repentance!* A sudden stroke of

this king of terrors may meet him in the full career of his days: his arrows are perpetually flying abroad, and strike where least expected. The infant in the arms, the youth in his prime, and man in his vigour, can find no way to escape from the dart of this ghastly tyrant, any more than the feebleness and decrepitude of old age. Your paths are beset with a thousand accidents; a man goes forth to his labour in the morning, in the evening he is brought home a breathless corpse; in the hour of festivity and mirth another is struck and expires amidst his gay companions. Sudden death is too common for any man to build any reliance upon an exemption from so terrifying a calamity, even supposing that no latent disorder arrests him in the midst of apparent health, and stretches him lifeless. Disasters innumerable are daily occurring, from which no man can possibly say he shall be free. Death in all shapes attends your steps: the fire, the water, the lightning, nay, the ground we tread upon are its ministers: every way you turn, he cuts off by some of these agents man in his best estate. The melancholy occurrences which we are

in the constant practice of hearing and seeing, shew us that a thousand casualties may happen, that in a moment shall strike us breathless. In short, there is no need to point out to you the many sudden and accidental events which at all ages take away the life of man, which we cannot but see every day we live, and therefore must be sensible how weak is the reliance upon a death-bed repentance.

How necessary then to live as become those who “know that they shall die.” Happy will be the prospect of death, if we live so as to be always prepared! and that we ought so to do, is a knowledge as much known to a man, as that he shall die; yet he still lives regardless of the event—regardless of the preparation necessary for it.

Whence comes this delusion? Have the cares or pleasures of this world any allurements sufficient to justify this defection from our future and eternal interest? Let us examine this point.

The grand object with most men is to procure a competency for the necessities of old age—the benefit of their children; at least, to obtain a comfort-

able support through life—all praise-worthy objects we allow. But do they always answer? Is industry always crowned with success? Does your rising up early and so late taking rest, and eating the bread of carefulness, produce the comforts that are to soothe the imbecility of old age? Suppose they do. Do they procure for your children the objects for which you have wasted the strength and vigour of your age? Not often! disappointments, losses, and numberless accidents frustrate your own hopes and expectations: and for your children there is seldom any thing left but the same round of vexations, cares, and troubles. No wise man, therefore, would place the obtaining of these perishable objects above the care of his eternal salvation, when he shall obtain “treasures that fade not away.”

If these objects ought not to be our principal aim, still less ought the pleasures of this world. No man had more experience of the transient nature of what are falsely called pleasures, than the wise author of the text, who pronounced them to be but vanity:—“Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept

“not from them: I withheld not my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced in all my labour.” And yet, when he looked on the works that he had wrought, and on the labour that he had laboured to do, “behold,” says he, “all was vanity and vexation of spirit.”

Pleasures are the principal object of youth, they pursue them with avidity, as the miser pursues riches, and both are alike fleeting. Talk to either of another world, and they heed you not. How shall we awaken them to a sense of their mortality? It is the same with the man of ambition! Not one will attend to the reflection that the sentence of death is passed upon him, while the object is before him, of which he is in search; though he is perfectly convinced, that the object, when obtained, will cease to be such, when his soul takes its departure from this world, and is fled to the everlasting hills.

How strange is this! Were it not daily to be seen amongst mankind, we should conclude this observation to be an unjustifiable reproach, and that no such absurdity prevailed, as that a man

should pursue what he knows he must leave in a few years, and neglect that which is to last for eternity: nay, should prefer the following of that which may cause the loss of the other—not only cause the loss of heaven, but risk the salvation of an immortal spirit.

If any thing could awaken us to a sense of our mortality, one would imagine it would be the almost daily spectacles of the remains of a fellow-creature deposited in the grave; but custom, or frequency of circumstances, lose their efficacy with the generality of mankind; and we see men even attend these solemnities occasionally, and yet, though they “know that the living they shall die,” never, with that seriousness becoming dying creatures, reflect on their own mortality.

But, my brethren! be assured it is our only refuge. Alas! when we ourselves shall be stretched on the bed of sickness, never more to rise to the enjoyments of this world, we shall then find our mistake in not giving these reflections due cultivation in our minds, and too late perceive our folly in relying on a death-bed repentance.

But how do we know that time will be given us to work out our own salvation, which, at the best of times, can only be done with fear and trembling? Strange inconsistency! that a man should wish to linger long on the bed of languishing disease, in order that he may then procure the salvation of his soul, when he can no longer pursue the gratifications of sense! The tortures of an afflictive disorder, then preying on an emaciated frame, give the mind little leisure to pay that attention to his everlasting interest, at that time more than ever requisite, to ensure to him that pardon for sin he has till then totally disregarded; and seldom do they allow an interval sufficiently tranquil, to reflect on his future destination, but too often add torment to the disorder, from a consciousness of his being unprepared for the stroke of death, who then most truly appears to the affrighted soul—the king of terrors.

Such is the lot of him who postpones his preparation for the next world, till reduced by sickness, he has nothing more to hope for in this: but this may never happen—“The living know that they

“shall die,” and that death may come in an hour they think not of: we are sensible of this—we know that in a moment we may be cut off from the land of the living. This minute we live, but the next we may be ranked amongst the number of the solemn dead. How comes it then that we are so infatuated as not to live, so that, come when it will, we may be always prepared? It is that the soul, so long habituated to its earthly tabernacle, has become depraved, and is lost to a sense of its immortal origin: all its desires centre in the earth. “God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a LIVING SOUL;” and yet forgetful of its divine origin, it shares in the polluted state of the body, and becomes contaminated with all its unruly appetites. How wretched this state! how deplorable the condition of a spirit thus debased, when about to quit its earthly abode, and to return to that God who gave it.

These reflections, my brethren! ought to inspire us with becoming apprehensions of our own precarious continuance in this world, and make us resolve to live in such a manner as become those

“who know they must die.” Let it not be a continual reproach to us, that we can view the daily spectacles of friends and neighbours carried to their long home, without being edified. The grave affords the best lesson to the survivors, that can be pointed out to frail and sinful dust. No man can mistake in a point so clear, where his own uncertain duration, even for a moment, is exhibited to him in its most striking light; but as we know our own weakness and want of resolution, let us beseech the Almighty to give us such fortitude, as to bear in mind so proper a sense of the certainty of our deaths, and the uncertainty of the time when they shall happen, that, by living as sojourners in a world that only leads to another, we may be always prepared to enter on that eternal state, whenever we shall be summoned to depart hence. And surely, with the enlivening hope that we shall one day join those friends, who have already passed through this valley of tears, we shall be animated to persevere in all our holy duties; and not only give it a transient residence in our minds, but let it always be an active principle to

influence our conduct; while, as members of society, we have duties to fulfil in our several stations, we may be continually mindful of our mortality, and live as those who "know that they shall die," and so be prepared at all times, to receive the stroke of death; by which means he will be disarmed of his terrors and lose his sting, and we shall consider him in the light of a friend, who is conducting us to those who have passed through life, and will with us enjoy the pleasures of an eternal rest from sorrow and from sin. *Amen.*

## SERMON X.



2 TIMOTHY III. 4.

*Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.*

THAT mankind should prefer the sensual enjoyments of this life before the love of that God in whom they live, move, and have their being; would appear incredible, did we not daily witness this, and many other instances of their depravity. This is the more culpable, and is a greater aggravation of their sin, since God hath not withheld them from the indulgence of any pleasure suitable to their nature, as *men* and as *christians*.

First, as men who are endowed with rational faculties. The world, by the direction of the Almighty, teems with variegated beauties, and na-

ture spreads her charms in vast profusion to gratify our senses. On the surface of the globe she exhibits an inexhaustible store of wonders. Pleasing in every view, even in her wildest state, she presents the sublimest scenes, as varied into hill and dale, wood and plain; either rising into mountains of different heights, or sinking into vales, where she assumes her loveliest form: and when she opens on the extended plain, she so mingles her manifold beauties of groves and lawns, lakes and rivers, that no one can view her without being convinced a hand divine could only form a scene so vast and so sublimely beautiful. The numerous creatures formed to inhabit this wonderful globe, each possessing its own particular element, proclaim the same Almighty power. The earth replenished with multitudes of animals;—the waters abounding with myriads of the finny tribe;—the air furnished with those of the winged species; some indeed noxious to the human race, others destined for his nourishment, but all intended to ornament the abode of highly-favoured man.

The varied foliage of trees and shrubs—the

flowers that deck the verdant meadows and enamel the herbage of the ground, spring only to enrich the scene; the murmuring brook, the flowing river, the falling cataract, the impetuous torrent, interspersed with every other picturesque beauty, delight the eye and shew a kind Creator attentive to the happiness of man. The bleating sheep, the lowing kine; but more than these the feathered tribe, that wing the air, from the early carol of the high-soaring lark, to the evening song of the melodious nightingale, appear designed to cheer the Lord of this lower world with their harmonious warblings. Dead to every sense of rational delight must that soul be who can refrain the exclamation—"How manifold are thy works, O Lord, "in wisdom hast thou made them all!" Such a profusion spread before the creatures of thine hand, bespeaks thine Almighty power, but thine universal goodness more.

This truth is still more manifest when we elevate our view to that glorious extended canopy—the blue ethereal sky; illuminated by the sun, who sends forth his beams to every part of this terra-

queous globe, as it revolves on its axis; yielding the blessings of heat and light to every creature dispersed on its surface: and when this luminary appears to sink beneath the western horizon, leaving us involved in the shades of night; then does the moon with her pale-reflecting rays, afford a mild effulgence, that banishes the gloom of darkness; while countless stars bespangle the spacious vault of heaven, and dart a tremulous lustre through the dense medium; bringing forth from the philosophic mind—the real admirer of nature’s most glorious works—and the adorer of the bounteous Author of all these wonders, this just observation, expressive of astonishment at the condescending goodness of the Almighty:—“When I survey the  
“heavens, even the works of thy fingers—the moon  
“and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is  
“man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of  
“man that thou visitest him?”

What is man, indeed, for whom these wonders are formed, and for whose use and delight, they are sustained with such regularity, that they furnish him with a continual treat to gratify him with

the most exquisite entertainment! What is man! Is he alone capable of taking delight from external appearances? Has he nothing within himself that can supply him with real pleasure equal to these objects? Yes, and far surpass them, great as the joys are they yield.

The bounteous Author of his being has afforded him every possible means of enjoying pleasures vast, great, and inexpressible, suited to the rational powers with which man is endowed. Consider him placed amongst his fellow-creatures in a world where every intellectual joy awaits him: blest with the power of doing good, and with every worthy disposition to incline him to its practice; on a strict survey of the manifold miseries entailed on man through the fall, he applies his bounty where it will be most serviceable, and does not fail to enjoy the highest satisfaction of which he is capable, when, by any means, he lessens the woes of his fellow-creatures: his relative and social duties are likewise all attended with the most pleasing sensations in the performance.

Secondly, when we contemplate him as a reli-

gious man and a christian—as worshipper of the God of heaven, and as a disciple of the great Restorer of his nature, whose dictates he obeys, and whose example he follows; we behold him rising superior to his primitive origin, when he was made a little lower than the angels; and becoming the heir of those immortal glories that await him in those happy realms, where boundless joy and pleasure reign in the presence of God for evermore.

Here is a fund of inexhaustible delight for every human being! Placed on a globe, abounding with all things that can contribute to his use and entertainment in earth, in air, and in the vast deep: the whole encircled with a firmament that boasts two great lights—“the one to rule the day, “the lesser to rule the night:”—participating with his fellow-mortals in all these blessings; possessing a mind formed to enjoy the soft delights of friendship and the tenderest affection—prompt to perform the kindest offices; and ardently desirous of confining his passions within the bounds of that reason he enjoys superior to the brute creation, and which being a portion of the divine intellect,

tends to the place from whence it sprung: he rests not till he has performed the will of his Creator, and performed those acts that are to obtain him a participation of all those glories which are pure, spiritual, and immortal.

Such are the pleasures God has made us capable of enjoying, as creatures endowed with rational faculties, and consequently capable of all the acts and offices of religion: and great as these pleasures undoubtedly are, yet no man, without abusing his reason, can place them in his esteem before the donor of it and them. But alas! these blessings are overlooked and disregarded; seldom obtaining from man his admiration, and not often his gratitude: their commonness and being daily seen (which in reality ought to claim his praise the more) render them, with too many, undeserving of any particular notice; while, with a strange depravity, they dignify with the name of *pleasure*, the momentary gratification of a sensual appetite, which ever leaves a sting behind, attended too often with consequences fatal to the salvation of their souls: these are they, whom the text stigma-

tizes as "*lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.*"

Did man rightly and properly estimate the blessings which surround him on all sides, the due contemplation of which can alone produce real pleasure, as they would infallibly lead him to the *love of God*; he would then learn to despise every sensual indulgence, as beneath the dignity of a rational creature, regarding them only as the means of felicity to himself and others, when confined within the bounds his reason prescribes, which was given him by Providence for this express purpose.

The naturalist who delights minutely to examine the formation of every one of nature's productions, animate or inanimate; in every investigation finds fresh cause to admire and love the Creator of all the wonders scattered over the the universe. But still, the pleasure of viewing and admiring the face of nature, in the glowing landscape—the wide expanse of waters—the chain of mountains that bound the prospect—the fertile valleys and the level plains clad with woodland, or enriched with herbage; and all the various classes of animals that

inhabit the earth, the air, and water—the spacious firmament, with the sun, the moon, and all the glittering host of stars, are level to the meanest capacity, and ought not to be viewed with the eye of indifference.

The God who formed these beauties and these wonders, claims our love. Shall man alone be insensible of all these bounties diffused on all sides for his pleasure—to beautify his abode and to contribute to his use and entertainment? Say not the *miseries of life* (which are the only justifiable causes for a neglect of their observance with due devotional regard) counterbalance the delights of surrounding objects. What! shall any trouble, grief, or misfortune, make man forget God's other blessings, which are of such absolute importance to his very existence, that though the hour of distress casts a gloom around, and every scene pleasing at other times, seems to wear a sombre hue:—shall he forget to praise the hand divine, that still supplies the globe he inhabits with all those varied gifts that yield him in profusion, every thing his nature can require; and whose rod and staff support him through the wilderness of life?

But such is man, when enveloped in the shade of misfortune: he disregards the bounty of God, and sets at nought the blessings daily vouchsafed, confining his reflection to the weight of misery he feels; never once considering that woe springs not from God, but from the fall of Adam—the sin of his first parent, which introduced all those troubles to which man is since born, and therefore as natural to him as it is for the sparks to fly upward.

If the man beset with misery is thus criminal in the neglect of the blessings around him; how much more so is he, who prefers the gratification of sense to the *love of God*? We have seen that God, so far from having denied him any real pleasure, has supplied him with an inexhaustible fund: and even those enjoyments, which being transient and momentary, deserve not certainly the name of pleasure, he has not withheld from him, and only expects he should exert the powers given him to confine them within proper limits. His reason ought to tell him, that God, in his goodness, has only his happiness in view, and has given him this faculty to govern and subdue his passions when lia-

ble to burst the bounds that nature herself has set for their indulgence; and the peace and serenity which will ensure the tranquillity of his bosom, when thus his passions are controlled, is the reward he is to enjoy in this life.

By the limitation of his enjoyments, man stands the fairest chance to experience what can alone, with any propriety, bear the name of pleasure in this world; as his health, by such means is only to be preserved, which enables him to enjoy whatever object he deems essential to his station in society, with secret satisfaction: and all his connexions of the most endearing nature, depend upon his possession of this blessing. Who then would place the boundless indulgence and unrestrained gratification of his passions, when they tend to destroy the source of all earthly felicity, before the steady preservation of them, under the mild influence of reason and self-government?

The peace and undisturbed serenity of mind, when the passions flow in a gentle current, enable a man to relish all that Providence has allotted him in this world. The mutual offices of friend-

ship, and the affectionate regards of endearing connexions, will constitute his chief felicity in this world; while the contemplation of the display of the bounty of God, as manifested in the formation of the globe, its beauty and usefulness, will lead him gradually from the admiration of his works, to the *love of God*.

By no means then, my brethren! let the surrounding objects of nature be at any time uninteresting: it discovers a mind heedless of the gifts of God, which he has so universally displayed throughout his works for our accommodation, advantage, and pleasure; and indicates both inattention and ingratitude. No man, let his capacity be what it will, can refrain from observing the regularity with which day and night succeed each other:—how the morning opens upon him with the cheerful dawn, and increasing light hails his approach to his labour; while nature, in every form, presents herself to the eye of even a careless observer with such variegated charms, as cannot fail to inspire, if man will but allow himself to reflect for a moment, an unceasing admiration of all the works of God, as

manifested wherever he turns his steps, in the surrounding scenery of the silvan landscape. And when the labour of the day is at an end, surely no one can retire to his habitation, to enjoy the blessing of repose without the most heartfelt gratitude to God, who has formed the globe in such a manner, that while the withdrawing sun hastens to illuminate the other hemisphere, the shades of evening falling round, suggest that now is the time to refresh the weary limbs with invigorating slumber, until the returning sun ascends from his eastern chambers, and again irradiates all nature with his enlivening beams.

Such meditations as these become us, and are worthy of that elevation we hold in the scale of beings which inhabit this terrestrial abode: especially when we reflect, that after death, when our souls shall be reunited to our now perishing bodies, they will become capable of contemplating the operations of the Almighty, in all the glories of immortality: and while this globe shall vanish away, and cease to be numbered with those planets that in their appointed revolutions now share in

the blessings of heat and light which the sun, fixed in the firmament, is ordained to yield: the praises of our God, in all his works and wonders, will be our eternal theme; and every tongue will be occupied in hymns of adoration to the *immortal, invisible, and only wise God.*

## SERMON XI.



1 KINGS, XVIII. 39.

*And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and they said, the Lord, he is the God! the Lord, he is the God!*

ELIJAH, the prophet, generally distinguished by the name of the place of his birth, viz. Thesbe, a city of Gilead, was a zealous advocate for the worship of the only true God. When Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, king of Israel, intended to destroy all remains of this worship, in order to pave the way for that of the two great idols of Phœnicia, Baal and Astaroth, she slew all the prophets of the Lord, save Elijah, who, after he had prophesied there should be “no dew, nor rain for years, “but according to his word;” by the command of God, went and concealed himself by the brook

Cherith, where he was fed by the ravens. The brook drying up, the Lord again commanded him to go to Zarephath, where he was sustained by a widow, whose “cruse of oil and barrel of meal,” miraculously supplied them with food, during the time of the drought. During his abode with this woman, her son fell sick and died, whom God, at the prayer of the prophet, restored to life. He then, at the expiration of three years, at the express command of God, returned, in order to present himself before Ahab.

The famine being great in Samaria, the royal residence of the kings of Israel, Ahab sent Obadiah, the governor of his household, in search of forage: he meeting with Elijah, was ordered by him to return to the king and acquaint him he was coming to present himself before him. On hearing which, Ahab met Elijah and accused him of being the cause of the famine. The prophet retorted—that it was he, and his Father’s house who had brought this calamity upon Israel, because they had forsaken the commandments of the Lord; and that he himself had followed Baalim:—“Now

“therefore,” continues the prophet, “send and  
“gather to me all Israel upon Mount Carmel, and  
“the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty; and  
“the prophets of the groves four hundred, which  
“eat at Jezebel’s table.”

The worship of these two idols, Baal and Ashtaroth, had formerly incensed the Lord against the ancient Canaanites, and had caused them to be extirpated by the Israelites, who now possessed their land. Their knowledge of this was a great aggravation of their sin, and often caused God to visit them with the rod of his anger, and to punish those sovereigns who patronized idolatry in a striking and exemplary manner.

Ahab, with all Israel, and the prophets of these two idols, met Elijah on Mount Carmel. The great contest was now to be decided betwixt himself in defence of the only true God, and these prophets in defence of their idols.

What must be the expectation of the people of Israel in this decision we cannot determine; but if not totally lost to all sense of shame for their delinquency, they must be particularly struck with

the appearance of Elijah, standing single in defence of the only true God—of that God who, from the call of their original progenitor, had shewn himself their divine benefactor—had been the guardian friend of the first fathers of their race—had been their immediate protector for four hundred and thirty years during their bondage in Egypt—had wrought his wonders for their deliverance therefrom, upon Pharoah and his subjects—had conducted them forty years through the wilderness by the hand of Moses—and had finally settled them in the land of Canaan: thus fulfilling his promise to their fathers, that he would give them that good land to possess.

From the first call of Abraham to the present time, they had experienced the most eminent marks of his distinguished kindness and his boundless mercy towards them, in every instance: notwithstanding which, and in spite of the judgments, with which he sometimes afflicted them for their continued stubbornness in sin and incessant idolatries; they still fell off from his worship, and debased themselves, by paying their adorations to

the senseless idols of every nation round about them, or with whom they had any connexion. When, therefore, they beheld the only prophet of their ancient worship, preserved by God from the slaughter of their cruel and ferocious queen; how must the painful recollection sting them with its bitterest reproaches for their apostacy, when they heard the prophet, with inspired dignity, contend for the honour due to the God of their fathers, and thus appeal to their own fickle judgment for the decision:—"How long halt ye between two opinions? "If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, follow him. I, even I alone remain a prophet of "the Lord, but Baal's prophets are four hundred "and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two "bullocks, and let them choose one for themselves, "and cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood and "put no fire under. And I will dress the other "bullock, and lay it on the wood, and will put no "fire under. And call ye upon the name of your "Gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; "and the God that answereth by fire, let him be "God. And all the people answered and said it "is well spoken."

This proposal could not be rejected by the prophets of Baal, who saw themselves reduced to the necessity either of accepting it, or of immediately owning the incapability of their God to give any answer whatever to their most earnest entreaties, or impious adjuration, by fire or any other sign.

They however prepared the altar, dressed the bullock, and called on the name of their God from morning till noon—they wildly leaped on the altar in all the extravagant phrenzy of idolatrous zeal. “Cry aloud,” said the prophet Elijah, deriding their vain efforts to demonstrate to the surrounding multitude their own apparent faith in the powers of their idol—“Cry aloud—for he is a God—he is talking, or he is pursuing—or he is in a journey —or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked.”

Provoked by this bitter taunt, their zeal mounted to madness, and inflamed with fury, they began to evince their merit at least to be heard, by the God they supplicated; by cutting themselves with knives and lancets till the blood gushed from them: but still their God, insensible himself, neither

heard or regarded them. These self-given wounds, were the proofs which were to convince the observers of their sincere attachment to Baal; but they served for another purpose, as we shall presently discover.

When the hour of the evening sacrifice approached, and the prophets of Baal were forced to give over their fruitless endeavours to make their God answer; Elijah called all the people around him, and began to prepare the altar of the Lord, which had been broken down.

He first took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of Israel, and therewith he built the altar in the name of the Lord. He made a trench or deep ditch round it: he then put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood; and then commanded that four barrels of water should be poured on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood; which being done three times, the water ran flowing round the altar: the trench was also filled therewith.

The prophet, full of faith and confidence, then drew near to the altar and bending forward before

it, he poured forth this prayer in the hearing of the multitude—" Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and  
" of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art  
" God in Israel, and that I am thy servant; and  
" that I have done all these things at thy word.  
" Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people  
" may know that thou art the Lord God, and that  
" thou hast turned their heart back again."

When the Israelites heard this prayer addressed to the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, how must it bring to their remembrance, if they had not reflected thereon before, all their sin in forsaking his service, to fall down and worship the false deities of the heathen nations, of whose inability to answer even the most fervent calls of their prophets, they had just had such a convincing testimony! How must the conviction strike them of the comparative greatness of the Almighty, and their gross iniquity in abandoning his worship; when they beheld what instantly followed the conclusion of the prophet's fervent prayer:—  
" The fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the  
" burnt sacrifice and the wood, and the stones and

“ the dust; and licked up the water that was in  
“ the trench!”

This indubitable proof of his being the true God, which he was pleased to give in answer to the call of his prophet, was so truly awful and amazing as to strike the beholders with veneration and dismay: they fell prostrate at the astonishing appearance of the fire descending from heaven, at the bare word of Elijah, and consuming both the altar and the sacrifice; and with united voices exclaimed—  
“ *The Lord, HE IS the God!—The Lord, HE IS the  
“ God.*”

Elijah, seeing that the Lord had brought the Israelites to a proper sense of their idolatrous folly; “ Take the prophets of Baal,” cried he, “ let not  
“ one of them escape.” And they took them, easily discernible by the self-inflicted wounds wherewith they had marked themselves, and which had also incapacitated them to avoid the vengeance of heaven by any attempt at flight; when Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, which ran at the foot of Mount Carmel, and slew them there.

It is not my intention to pursue the history of Elijah further; but to call your attention to what is suggested to us by the subject of which we have been treating. We have seen the proneness of the Israelites to forsake the worship of the God of their fathers, notwithstanding all that he had done for them.

Does this, my brethren! in any respect concern us? What is the lesson we are to learn from this history? We cannot be guilty of idolatry—we have not the opportunity to fall prostrate and adore a senseless image of wood or stone—“the likeness of any thing in heaven above, in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth:” but we may, and it must not be concealed, that too many of us are too prone to fall off from the worship of the God who has done more for us than for the Israelites, through whom his mercy is extended to us by the sacrifice of his Son; and whose covenant set at nought by them, he has transferred to us, who are now the children of his adoption and the heirs of glory.

That the worship of God is greatly neglected in

the present day, is too obvious a truth; on which it is scarcely necessary long to insist. Look to the places appointed for his worship—how few assemble in the temple to pray, to praise, or to give him thanks! And how still fewer regard this day appointed for his service with due solemnity! The adoration of the supreme Being, who made, who protects and guards us, has no place in the thoughts of many; his ordinances are slighted and openly despised; his covenant of mercy, revealed and fulfilled in his Son, is ridiculed; whilst on the contrary, every passion and appetite (those idols of the carnal man always at enmity with God) must be gratified; and that attention paid to them, which should be given to the commands of God, who bestowed them on man for more rational purposes.

In what respect then does this differ from the sin of the Israelites? I am afraid we shall be found in the day of the Lord, not less guilty than they, if not with greater aggravation; because to us has been vouchsafed a new and unchangeable covenant, established upon better promises. The Israelites might plead the prevalence of bad example among

the higher ranks: we perhaps can do the same: but let us not deceive ourselves. Whilst every man has sense to discern the path he ought to tread, and can see that others are widely deviating from the right way, he surely is to blame to continue in the practise of sin, and must answer for his own folly, and not hope for any extenuation of his guilt, because that others, higher in degree and superior in knowledge, have done the same. Besides his own conduct may furnish a plea for others to copy his example, and thus, while he blames the great, he may by his imitation of them corrupt others, till a general depravity pervades the whole.

It is very common to urge the examples of those above us in any sin we commit: we are glad to remove some portion of the blame from ourselves, and to lay it upon others: but this is very unjust, for many are the eminent and praiseworthy characters in the ranks above us, whose examples we should do well to imitate. But in yielding to the influence of our corrupt inclinations, we prefer copying the actions of those, who, enabled by fortune, or by some other adventitious circumstance,

run into all the excesses of vicious indulgence. For alas! it is a melancholy truth, that in all ranks of men, those who yield to the torrent of their evil desires, and pursue every dictate of lawless passion, are by far the greater majority: and while virtue seeks not the applause of men, vice is seen to stand forth with unblushing confidence, alike regardless of observation as of censure.

It is our duty to improve from observation and the experience of others. In the instance before us, it is impossible not to remark how God throughout wrought for his name's sake. His prophet, after his escape to the brook Cherith, and his sojourn with the widow of Zarephath, was commanded to appear before Ahab, and to urge him to bring the prophets of his idols to a decisive test of the difference betwixt himself, as God of the Hebrews, and the senseless deities the king and his subjects profanely worshipped. The example of a monarch like Ahab, governed in all things by a queen furious in her zeal for idolatry, and fatal in her revenge upon all who opposed her will; required the striking proof of a miracle to restore his

worship with men whose dispositions were so fluctuating as those of the children of Israel had ever been. When, therefore, they beheld the certain proof of his superiority above all Gods, and witnessed the fire descend from heaven at the prayer of Elijah; they instantly fell and adored that God against whose government they had been so often rebellious. All the manifestations of his glory, his power, and his judgments which he had shewn to their fathers, as well as constant forbearance to punish while waiting to be gracious, now came to their recollection: when struck with indescribable awe of his majesty and goodness, they proclaimed him to be the only true God. Like them, as we have more reason, we should acknowledge him the great and merciful God, and evermore recollect what he has done for us and for our fathers:—"The noble works he did in their days, and in the old time before them"—all his works of judgment and his oftener works of mercy. The praises of our God should be ever on our lips, and in his assembled congregation we should unite to give the glory and honour due to his mighty name.

Happy should I deem myself, could I set forth the boundless mercy of our God! But sure it is needless—you are christians—you are the partakers of a covenant better far than even the children of Israel could boast. The mercy proffered to them, being rejected, is bestowed on us with greater advantageous blessings annexed. No God wrapt in flame, from the summit of Sinai delivers his precepts: even mercy, the glorious attribute of the Godhead, was then so blended with judgment, that man tremblingly obeyed; and with solemn dread performed the required sacrifice; nor expected mercy but as the ceremonial rites and the precepts of the law were rigidly and exactly fulfilled. But now, that Almighty love has descended from heaven, and has vouchsafed to appear in human form; we hail the prophet whom the Lord our God has raised like unto Moses; we hail the Mediator of the new covenant; we hail the beloved Son of God, leaving the bosom of his Father to ransom the race of men from the fatal consequences of original sin: and glowing with the gratefulest emotions, we feel and must own that the “*Lord*” Jesus

who has done such great things for us—“ *he is the God—the Lord, he is the God.*”

Happy christian!—Living under the last and best dispensation of Almighty grace, what holy fervour in all our religious duties should we not evince, in the contemplation of his wisdom and mercy, who, to redeem us from eternal destruction, vanquished satan, sin, and death; when he assumed our nature and satisfied the justice of the Almighty, by offering an adequate atonement! He being equal with the Father as touching his Godhead, could alone be deemed a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and oblation for the sins of the world.

Let not this certain truth be banished from your minds! Let not the unbelievers, who scoff at every thing their reason cannot penetrate; let them not shake your belief in the dignity of your high Redeemer: he is the Lord of Hosts—the King of Glory! Give him then the honour due unto his name. Mystery envelopes the throne of God, yet from thence descends a ray of hope to animate the real christian, who, with the eye of faith, there

beholds his Saviour seated at the right hand of God, vested with the glory that he had before the world was, and will for ever have it when the earth and all its vanities shall be no more.

Until it shall please our God to call us to participate with our Lord in all these felicities; and we are doomed to fulfil our course in this terrestrial abode, united to a corrupt and perishable tenement of clay;—oppressed with sorrow and borne down by calamity as we must be; let us never forget our duty to God, nor ever lose sight of that prerogative we here enjoy, as rational creatures, and heirs of the promises;—of flying to him for succour in every extremity, and of praising and rendering him our thanks from day to day.

Shall the idols of the world—its riches, its honours, or its pleasures, cause us to forget the God to whom we stand indebted, not only for all the blessings of this life, but for the hope of that felicity, to the future enjoyment of which his covenant of mercy and grace has restored us? Reflect on the incalculable loss the Israelites now sustain for the rejection of this covenant, and be warned by

their dispersion through every nation of the known world, no more to be ranked as a people amongst the kingdoms of the earth. In the instance, however, we have been considering, their conduct claims a degree of commendation, and is an example from which we may learn *our* duty. In the courts of the Lord's house—in his temple, where the congregations gather together to praise him, there should we on the days appointed, continually resort: and not only so, but in our closets, retired from the world—shut from the converse of men, we should pour forth the secrets of our hearts to him, whose ear is ever open to the devotions of his faithful and chosen servants.

So far then we may imitate the example of the Israelites, when assembled on Mount Carmel they saw the astonishing display of his power, and the surprising effect of the prayer of the pious prophet, as to their falling down and together worshipping the Lord God of their fathers. We have to boast as well as they, not only of numberless instances of his power, but many more of his goodness towards us: and if our fervour be as glowing, and

our prayers as ardent, as those which fell from the hallowed lips of the venerable Elijah, we shall bring down the Holy Spirit from heaven, as the tongues of fire descended on the disciples upon the day of Pentecost, which shall enlighten, purify, and enflame our hearts with love to God, and zeal for his eternal glory.

## SERMON XII.



GENESIS XXXIII. 9.

*I have enough, my brother, keep that thou hast unto thyself.*

COULD I find a subject better calculated to promote your temporal felicity, than the one which the words I have read to you suggest; I would recommend it with all the earnestness in my power, as from it must spring all the happiness you can enjoy in your respective stations.

The history of the person who made the declaration in the text, is singular in its kind, and deserves our notice, as he was not always of that satisfied disposition which the words denote: it will furnish us also with some reflections on that remarkable difference of opinion men entertain on the same

subject, in the different seasons of prosperity and adversity.

Esau was the eldest of the twin sons of Isaac; but in an unguarded moment, despising his birth-right, he sold it to his younger brother Jacob, to satisfy the momentary cravings of hunger, and confirmed the indiscreet bargain with an irrevocable oath. For this contempt of his privileges as the first-born, and for his profaneness in solemnly swearing to the absolute disposal of them, and on so slight a consideration, God allowed his brother to supplant him in the paternal blessing, though fraudently obtained, at his fond mother's instigation, from the dying patriarch Isaac: which blessing had many sacred and valuable privileges annexed to it, founded on the promises of God to the faithful Abraham, the father of a race, in whose descendants the promised seed should be preserved, in whom, "all the nations of the earth should be blessed."

In the patriarchal ages, a double portion of the paternal inheritance belonged to the eldest son. To him likewise appertained the right of rule and

government over the family, and especially the honour of priesthood, which, prior to the promulgation of the Mosaical law, rested in the first-born of every family, in parents, in princes, in kings, who always exercised the office of priest, and offered their own sacrifices.

Esau, therefore, by disposing of his birth-right, renounced these privileges, and regardless of the covenant which God had made with his forefather Abraham, he took to himself two wives from the Hittites, Judith, the daughter of Beeri, and Basemath, the daughter of Elon, “which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and Rebecca.”

But when he found that Jacob had supplanted him in the paternal blessing pronounced by his father Isaac on his death-bed, he then perceived the error he had committed in selling his birth-right, and he shed tears, not of compunction, but of vexation at his folly; and he determined to slay his brother as soon as the days of mourning for his father should arrive. Learning however that Jacob had escaped his wiles, and was gone by the advice of his parents to Padanaram, to marry a

daughter of his mother's brother Laban, in order that the covenant which God had made of preserving the promised blessing to the posterity of Abraham should be strictly adhered to, his resentment by degrees subsided, and beginning to see his folly in its true light, he sought to repair it by marrying Mahalath, the daughter of Ismael, his father's brother by Hagar, the handmaid of Sarah.

But it was too late: and after his brother's departure, the sword being the only portion Isaac his father could give him; he therewith extirpated the Horites from the mountains of Seir. Adversity softened his disposition, and taught him the true value of all worldly possessions. In time, however, he surmounted his difficulties, and with his accumulated riches, he gathered wisdom from past experience.

When his brother Jacob, after an absence of more than twenty years, returned from Padanaram with his wives, his little ones, his flocks, and herds, dreading the rage of Esau, he sent messengers to him as a token of his wish for reconciliation, when Esau sent him word in return, he himself would

come and meet him. Jacob still apprehending the anger from which he had fled so many years before, and on account of which he had been so long an alien from his native land: to appease him, divided his flocks and herds into separate droves, and sent them before him as so many presents to his brother. But Esau, no sooner beheld him, than with marks of true fraternal affection, he ran to him, fell on his neck and wept. And when he asked him what meant those droves he had met, Jacob told him, “they were to find grace in his sight,” he replied with that disinterestedness he could nowhere have learned, but in the school of adversity—“I have enough, my brother, keep that thou hast unto thyself.”

Two very important lessons may be learned from this history: the profaneness of Esau lost him the favour of God, and distress taught him the true value of the temporal possessions of this life. In the first heat of passion he vowed vengeance against his brother; but adversity soon brought him to a just sense of an act which originated in his own folly.

Many no doubt there are, who, like Esau, on trivial occasions, confirm their actions or assertions by using the name of the Most High, in as irreverent and as careless a manner: and as such wanton profaneness is highly displeasing to God; if his mercy vouchsafe them not the curses for which they petition: it is not, believe me, either erroneous or uncharitable to suppose that the many afflictions, troubles, or woes which men suffer, are the consequences of their own imprecations. The very curses for which, in a rash unguarded moment they wish, may not instantaneously befall them; yet such sufferings may come upon them, as would not have happened, had they not petitioned God to hurl the punishments of the next world upon them, as the profane words fell from their lips.

But wherein Esau was principally and irreverently profane was, not only in using an oath to confirm his hasty and indiscreet disposal of his birth-right; but in that confirmation he manifested an utter contempt for his high privileges as the first-born of the son of Abraham, with whom God had established a covenant which was to descend

through every generation of his posterity, until the time should come when all the families of the earth should be blessed in his seed.

With too many I fear this is the case in the present day: although the God of reconciliation and “of peace, has brought again from the dead our Saviour Christ, through the blood of the *everlasting covenant* ;” yet daily do we hear men despise and contemn the display of his goodness to sinful man, and the wonders of his operation in restoring him to the felicity he had lost. Shut up from human intellect are the councils of God; but his benevolence has unfolded sufficient to our understanding, to convince us that his justice is satisfied, and the throne of his mercy is open to the humble and contrite, through the atonement of his crucified Son.

In a want of veneration for the name of God and neglect of his ordinances: in setting at nought the revelation he has condescendingly yielded to man, and all the mysteries of his love, profaneness is manifested: and would to God that I could find a single instance, where one or other of these, if

not the whole, are not openly and daringly contemned. In our streets we hear the name of God wantonly used by men, nay, even by children, who, by his permission alone, possess that breath with which they blaspheme his name, and imprecate curses on themselves and others. Nor need we seek far for those profane spirits who mock at every thing that is not within the reach of their reason; who elevate this faculty above revelation; deriding the means by which salvation has been vouchsafed; and endeavouring to bring down the eternal councils of God to a level with their own short-sighted understandings.

What wonder, if this faculty of reason should be withdrawn, as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, to convince them of its imbecility, and how deplorably sunk are they, when the Almighty is pleased to lay this judgment upon them, for the abuse of a faculty bestowed on them for the purpose of understanding and obeying his will? What wonder, if some grievous disease attack them as in the case of Herod, in the midst of their arrogance and vain confidence in their own power and strength, to

teach them the sovereign disposer of life has the power to arrest their progress in the pursuit of any worldly gratification, and stretch them weak and impotent on the bed of disquietude and pain? What wonder, if a sudden misfortune come upon them, and destroy their worldly prosperity—sink their towering hopes, and poverty, with her meagre train, beset them round? Then will they learn that the long-suffering of God has only waited to be gracious; and that he only inflicts these chastisements upon them, in order to bring them to a proper sense of their dependence upon him: then will they, with tears of unfeigned sorrow, beg the intercession of that Divine Redeemer, who, passing through the various sorrows of life, has ascended to that glory he had before the world was—even to his seat at the right hand of God, where he pleads his blood shed in atonement for the sincerely repentant sinners.

It was by this last chastisement Esau first perceived his errors, and learned the true value of the temporal possessions of this life. Adversity is the only school where the wisdom of living well is really

taught: "Before I was afflicted," says the Psalmist, "I went wrong, but now have I kept thy commandments." To those who have been in distress, or in a state of such indigence, as to feel all the keenness of hunger and want, this declaration will appear the dictates of truth. In the day of prosperity, we are too apt to forget God, who has poured his benefits upon us; and either given us possessions to enjoy by inheritance, or has blessed us with success in our professions or callings. These possessions we falsely conclude are to procure the superfluities of life: and having created imaginary wants, we think they ought to be gratified, never once reflecting that beyond the bounds which nature herself has prescribed, our appetites need no indulgence.

But when poverty befalls us, and we are reduced by some calamitous event to penury and woe; necessity soon teaches to correct our appetites, and render them subservient to those confined and narrow limits our humble circumstances afford. Then we soon discover the wants of nature are but few; and if conscience have nothing to disturb the

serenity we may enjoy in this reduced state; we shall find this moderation and temperance greatly conduce to our health and felicity.

In the lowly vale of poverty likewise, should true repentance arise in our bosoms, and we diligently seek to render the state to which we are fallen, promotive of the virtues that will terminate in our eternal happiness: so far from feeling regret for the prosperity we have lost, we shall be thankful that God, by humbling our rebellious nature, and disciplining us to the true knowledge of ourselves, has taught us the proper value of the perishable things of this world, and the instability of all human happiness: and that he alone is himself a never-failing refuge for the distressed—the rock of ages—the everlasting God, in whom all they that put their trust “*shall not be desolate.*”

Then, when our desires are without violence preserved within the bounds of temperance, we shall be able to exclaim with Esau, “*I have enough.*” What man is there that has been once made sensible of the transient nature of human wealth and grandeur; and has experienced the calm delights

which attend on cheerful contented poverty would exchange his lot, when he knows in that state, sunk as he may appear to the voluptuous and worldly-minded sensualist, he can better practise these duties of christianity—humility, resignation, temperance, and fortitude, till he rises in the sight of God to a higher scale of dignified felicity, than if the most splendid earthly diadem glittered round his temples!

I mean not, however, to disparage the advantages of prosperity; for happy is he, who, practising the virtues of that state, becomes the agent of the Almighty, to dispense happiness to all in need! But a satisfied unrepining disposition, cannot have that value in prosperity, which is affixed to it when it is possessed by him, who, amidst the want of every thing but the real necessaries of life, is blessed with moderate wishes, and a temper of mind disposed to submit without murmur to the will of God.

When we have learnt this divine art of contentment, and possess that serenity of mind which ever flows from a consciousness of having performed our several duties to God and man, perhaps it may

please him to raise us again to the station we before enjoyed; and as with Esau, cause us to abound in those things that will restore us to our former rank in society. If we have truly benefited from past experience, the language he made use of, when he declined the conciliatory presents of Jacob, will be our boast and delight; and we shall not again abuse the gifts of God by intemperance and folly, but as stewards and ministers of the grace of God, distribute them to the comfort of the needy. But if we do not act thus, better will it be for us to remain where we are, in the lowest vale of humble life, than to be placed again on an eminence from which we may once more fall; and with such aggravated circumstances, as may render us incapable of enjoying any peace or satisfaction in the adverse condition, to which, for our folly, we are again reduced.

But surely from past experience we ought to learn wisdom. Lamentable indeed was the condition of Esau: he had not only lost his birth-right and patrimony, but he had lost the favour of God by his profaneness and contempt of his promises.

God therefore rejected him, and chose his brother to perpetuate his merciful covenant to succeeding generations. Our condition may soon be brought to a state equally as lamentable, if we, by profanation and contempt of the ordinances of God, shew ourselves unworthy to hold a place in the rank of rational, but dependent and accountable beings. We may not indeed suffer in this world. God does not always inflict his punishments in this life; in order that the dread of his eternal vengeance, which, as a God of justice, abhorring all iniquity, must fall on the guilty; may induce us by repentance to seek for that pardon and forgiveness, which will never be withholden from the sincerely penitent.

But happy sure is he, who, let his condition be what it may, prosperous or adverse, is perfectly resigned to the will of God; who can with uniform composure take from his hand either good or ill, and preserve the tranquillity of his bosom by a conscientious discharge of all the duties of that state, in which it has pleased the Almighty to place him.

Poverty can never detract from the mental felicity

city of the truly contented man. The heaviest afflictions that may befall him, can but lightly touch his bosom. He regards them as the friendly visitations of a kind and propitious Deity, who is correcting the evil propensities of his nature, that all his desires may be contracted within the happy bounds of temperance and mediocrity; and by rendering his cares less about the pursuit of worldly advantages, affords him the better means to work out his salvation.

Contentment is the greatest blessing we can enjoy: never did the goodness of God Almighty vouchsafe to man a better expedient to lessen the severity of the casual misfortunes incident to him in every station. Alas! distresses innumerable attend us all from the sceptered monarch to the most abject of the sons of men. All are liable to distress in some shape or other. Sorrow and woe seem to be our certain portion in our pilgrimage through life; and few there are, who, before life shall terminate, may not expect to taste of misery's bitterest cup. Let not the man of high degree, whose wealth and honours seem to guard him from the

assaults of misfortune, place too much dependance upon the security they may for the present afford him. These have been known to fail. Wealth has slipt even from the grasp of the sordid miser; and the man of ambition has been dashed headlong from his towering height, and stript of his gaudy plumes: his honours have been exchanged for ignominy and disgrace; and the keenest shafts of adversity have pierced his heart through with many sorrows, whose felicity to the eye of the world, appeared complete and permanently established.

Then, my brethren! let us strive to enrich our souls with the possession of this heavenly gift: it is a treasure which will never fail us, whilst we act in a manner our consciences approve. To the dictates of this monitor let us ever attend; she points out to us that no true happiness is to be found without a due obedience to the commands of God: and if these are performed with devotional regard to *him, ourselves, and others*, we shall not fail to enjoy that greatest blessing ever bestowed on man—a happy, placid, and contented mind.

## SERMON XIII.



JOB XI. 16.

*Thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away.*

As the passing current rolls onward to the ocean, and there is lost in the multitude of waters; so shall the misery of man pass away and be remembered no more!

Pleasing thought! who would not, to obtain this oblivion to his sorrows, exert every means in his power, and perform every requisite duty!

Ask the parents who have lost the children of their love, or the mournful survivors the partners of their dearest affection: ask the sons and daughters whose trickling tears bespeak the heavy loss their filial fondness has sustained; and with gladness will

they hail the means to efface those sorrows that dim the eye:—enquire of every child of calamity who is suffering under the persecutions and afflictions of life, all that man can endure, and they will with transport welcome the information that shall banish their woes and disperse every cause of complaint.

According to Zophar, one of the friends of Job, whom he is addressing, this happy state is pronounced to be the recompense of these duties:—“If thou prepare thine heart and stretch out  
“thine hands to God—if iniquity be in thy hand,  
“put it far away; and let not wickedness dwell in  
“thy tabernacles.”

These words, if we may credit the Naamathite, contain all the advice that is necessary for this purpose, and therefore for the happiness of our fellow-creatures, it is worth while to give them our present consideration, as besides the banishment of misery, they will procure for us many valuable blessings, which are thus enumerated by Zophar in his address to Job:—“Thou shalt lift up thy face with-  
“out spot: yea, thou shalt be steadfast and shalt  
“not fear, because *thou shalt forget thy misery,*

“ *and remember it as waters that pass away.* And  
“ thine age shall be clearer than the noon-day;  
“ thou shalt shine forth; thou shalt be as the  
“ morning. Thou shalt be secure *because there*  
“ *is hope.* Yea, thou shalt dig about thee and  
“ thou shalt take thy rest in safety; thou shalt  
“ lie down in peace and none shall make thee  
“ afraid.”

These words contain a tacit reproof of Job, whom Zophar supposes, that in case he had with a due preparation of heart made his prayers to God; and put away iniquity from himself, and wickedness from the tabernacles of his dwelling; the consequences would have been what he so beautifully represents as the recompense of private and family devotion. But from the misery which Job and his household suffered, he erroneously inferred, that he must never have prayed to God in sincerity, nor had either put away sin from himself or his family. To a rebuke so very unjust, Job replies in words of admirable strength and feeling:—“ No doubt  
“ but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with  
“ you. But I have understanding as well as you.

“ I am not inferior to you. Who knoweth not such  
“ things as these? I am as one mocked of his  
“ neighbour, who calleth upon God, and he an-  
“ swereth him. The just upright man is laughed  
“ to scorn. He that is ready to slip is as a lamp  
“ despised in the thought of him that is at ease.  
“ The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they  
“ that provoke God are secure, into whose hand  
“ God bringeth abundantly.”

To infer that prosperity is the reward of virtue, as adversity is the punishment of sin, was not peculiar to the friends of Job; it was an opinion, which arose in a great measure from the obscurity which enveloped the prospect of a future state, in the dark ages of the world: and this history, no less than to set off the extraordinary patience of Job in the heaviest affliction that ever fell to the lot of one man, seems also to have been written to correct this erroneous way of judging of the merit or demerit of the person enjoying prosperity or suffering adversity.

Had we no other world to expect but this, it might be a natural inference to suppose that afflic-

tion was the punishment of sin, as an exemption from the evils of life was the recompense of virtue. Such a plan might be consistent with Providential justice, but utterly irreconcilable to the goodness we cannot but fix in the Almighty, from all his dispensations to the children of men. Therefore, when we find a man, in whom the most consummate virtue is manifest, subject to afflictions; and that the wicked are often more prosperous than the worthy, we may be assured that this world cannot be the place of final reward or punishment, but that there will be another where these shall take place with the justice due to the innocent and to the guilty.

However, with the application of the words to Job, I purpose to have nothing further to do than to examine the justness of the observation, as applicable to the circumstances of every man whom misery of one kind or other attacks at different seasons of life.

In a general point of view, the whole passage is to be understood thus:—"If with a heart duly prepared in sincerity we stretch forth our hands in

“ prayer to God, polluted neither with the iniquity  
 “ which we ourselves have committed, nor with  
 “ the permission of wickedness in our households,”  
*then* “ with a conscience unstained by sin we shall  
 “ look up with confidence to God: unmoved we  
 “ shall stand and not be afraid: the remembrance  
 “ of our miseries shall pass away like the gliding  
 “ current: our age shall shine clearer than the  
 “ meridian beams of the sun, resembling more the  
 “ mild radiance of morn. We shall be secure, be-  
 “ cause there is hope: we shall be defended on  
 “ every side and shall take our rest in safety: we  
 “ shall lie down in peace and none shall make us  
 “ afraid.”

In order to shew how far these observations are  
 just; that these happy consequences shall result  
 from our performance of the duties already men-  
 tioned; we must be sensible that only in one case  
 can it happen, viz. when our consciences bear tes-  
 timony to the sincerity of our hearts in prayer, and  
 to our purposes being serious to forsake sin in our-  
 selves and in our households.

Without a due preparation of the heart, the ex-

tending of our hands in prayer is but mockery before God: yet, upon the efficacy thereof, depends the removal of the sorrows we feel. The heart must be sincere and devoutly formed: it must have a deep sense of its own weakness, and a perfect reliance on him whom it addresses in time of need. And to prove its sincerity every sin, every iniquity must be abandoned in future, not only of our own, but our influence must be exerted that no sort of wickedness be committed in our households.

But alas, my brethren! seldom do we address God with a heart disposed in earnest to forsake the paths that have brought us to the vale of misery. Affliction indeed makes us apply with diligence to the throne of mercy, and we embrace every opportunity to pour out our supplications to the Almighty. But still, so little do we know ourselves, that we perhaps should find it difficult to say, that if our afflictions were removed, we would in future avoid the deeds of sin ourselves, and exert our authority that others should do so too, whose stations under us, render them subject to our advice, reproof, or example.

Surely we have no need to be taught that affliction of whatever kind comes from God: it is his hand that smites us; therefore to pour out our addresses with uplifted hands and with hearts penetrated with the deepest sorrow, is highly incumbent on us: while with penitence unfeigned we cast away iniquity from ourselves, and guard our households, lest sin should pollute them again. Our sons and our daughters, our man-servants and maid-servants, should join in prayer when our hands are stretched out towards heaven, and our knees are bent in humble entreaty to God, to pardon our offences, and to give us all that grace, that we and they may henceforth walk in all the ways of purity and godliness.

Private and family devotion, with a real abandonment of sin in both, ever lay the foundation of all other duties; and consequently he who is punctual in them, has the greatest claim to those blessings mentioned by Zophar. To forget our misery—no more to suffer the torturing reflection on the woes we have endured, might induce us to apply to the remedy here pointed out, viz. a conscious-

ness of our performing our several duties to God, as they respect ourselves and all those over whom we have any authority.

But instead of this, the unfortunate, in many instances, fly to the scenes where intemperance presides; and search in perpetual intoxication a forgetfulness of woe; till too late they find their miseries are augmented and rendered irremediable by such wretched means. It is indeed the advice of the mother of King Lemuel—"Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that are heavy of heart: let him drink and forget his poverty and remember his misery no more." By these words instructing her son to be attentive to those who are in the extremity of need; and to endeavour to render the remembrance of their sorrows less irksome, by the administration of such cordials as will give a temporary relief to the woes of the heart, when pressed down with grief.

Strong drink may restore the wretch ready to perish, and wine may exhilarate the spirits of him who is heavy of heart: he may for a time forget

his distress and lose the remembrance of his misery; but carried beyond the bounds of temperance, both will be found false as well as fatal in their consequences; and yield not that oblivion to woe which the unfortunate vainly hope to find in their free indulgence. Would the desponding mind of man enjoy a mitigation of its sorrows, this can alone be obtained by the soothing reflection of having performed every duty to God, and done our utmost to extend his service through every department of our households; then shall a composure of mind await us, from which all the evils of life can never detract or effectually destroy.

When we thus have been careful to preserve a sense of religion in our minds and in our families, as resulting from our dependance upon God; upon this basis every other virtue required of us as social beings, when we come forth into the world, becomes both our delight and invariable study to perform. No temptation can draw us aside from the path of virtue. The world and its follies; nay, its evils and misfortunes can never shake our resolution, nor cause us to deviate from the line of duty

our religion prescribes. Steady in the course we have marked out for ourselves, and conscious of its being conformable to the will of God, we go on "*secure, because there is hope:*" the fear of God being cultivated in all who are placed around us, we take our rest in safety—we lie down in peace, and none can make us afraid.

Yes, my brethren! it is *hope* that animates us—that encourages us to persevere in all holy ways: it leads us through every temptation—every difficulty, in the trying hour of distress, and in the moment when affliction besets us most, and we are cast down to the veriest depths of misery and woe. The hope of reward from the God, whose service has been our delight and our study, shall cause our past miseries to be forgotten and remembered no more than the waters that glide away.

When we consider that as parents and masters of families we have duties which we are indispensibly bound to perform, as accountable to God for the good or ill conduct of our children and domestics; we cannot be too attentive to instil into every branch of our families, a proper knowledge of what be-

comes us to pay to God. Prayer ought daily to be made to him who showers his blessings upon us and feeds us with his bounty: and both by precept and example, we should set before our households continually, the beauty of holiness. "I will walk in my house with a perfect heart," says the Psalmist: "Whoso leadeth a godly life he shall be my servant." "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord," was the resolution of Joshua: and in the consciousness of promoting this, will depend that tranquil state of mind, which the storms of life can never discompose.

But the misfortune is, we seldom think of this or any other duty which we owe to God, till some calamity has brought us to a proper judgment of our long neglect of the acknowledgment of his mercy towards us, and the daily instances of goodness he vouchsafes us.

Suppose a man surrounded on all sides with blessings—prosperous in his affairs, and happy in all his domestic connexions. Every relative and friend to whom he is bound by the ties of amity and love, happy and prosperous like himself. Health

smiles on all, and joy diffuses itself over every countenance: no want or anxiety disturbs their peace; but all experience that infelt satisfaction which can alone flow from the conscious enjoyment of every good this world can afford. But as no real happiness can be said to subsist without the favour of God, nor a true relish given to its enjoyment; suppose him further to be blessed with the pleasing innate conviction of having fulfilled in every respect, his duties to God and man; and surely you will allow, not any thing can be wanting to complete and perfect his felicity.

Now suppose every affliction combined that can befall a man, suddenly and unexpectedly to come upon him with all their weight—sickness, disease, poverty, imprisonment, and even slavery: let every branch of his family be torn from his embrace by some unforeseen disastrous event: let him suffer the persecuting malice and slanderous aspersions of his bitterest enemy: let his former friends approach him, but to add to his misery by their unmerciful upbraidings: yet firm in inward virtue, and confident in the favour of God, he will look

with pity on the scorn of men, the rebukes of pretended friends, and the persecuting malice of the envious.

Inspired with all the glories of his approaching recompense, his miseries will soon be obliterated, and his sorrows be no more remembered than the gliding stream, that flows to the ocean and mingles in the waters that encircle the earth.

Here then, my brethren! we see our duty: let us not wait till some calamity befall us, and awaken us to its necessity: let us instantly, if we have not done it already, enter upon the service of God, by devoting to him ourselves and our households.

He who is now in prosperity, and seems secure from the assaults of misfortune, may suddenly be reduced to the lowest abyss of misery. The youth who flutters in all the wantonness of thoughtless gaiety, may, notwithstanding, be thrown headlong from his vain confidence: it therefore behoves both of them to lay a good foundation in an early habitude to prayer, and the performance of those duties they owe to God, as members of an household that daily receive fresh bounties at his hands.

As to ourselves, who have tasted of misery's bitterest cup, surely we can want no persuasion to pursue such means as will cause us to forget the sorrows through which we have passed. Let us reflect whose hand supported us through them; and who, under every trying calamity—the loss of parents, children, or some dear remembered friend, supplied us with the consoling hope of meeting them hereafter in heaven: and under the deprivation of fortune, who raised our thoughts to the expectancy of those everlasting treasures, which are incorruptible, and which are reserved for our enjoyment throughout all eternity.

In short, as every man more or less feels misery of one kind or other press upon him, there is no need, I should hope, to add more persuasions to what has already been advanced, to urge you to begin upon the duties recommended by Zophar, who, although he erroneously accused Job of a neglect of them, yet was certainly right in his conclusion of their efficacy, so far as conscience is concerned.

This internal monitor can alone take all bitter-

ness from the cup of misery. When we have fulfilled these duties in private life, which are the basis on which every public virtue must be built, she will enable us to look confidently to God, with the assured hope of being accepted by him. Job was thereby enabled to exhibit the most unexampled patience, under such a complication of losses as never before fell to the lot of one man, with the aggravated mortification of bearing with the unjust accusations of pretended friends. His example affords a proof of what that man can do, whose conscience bears testimony to the uprightness of his conduct towards God and towards man: and happy is he, who can adopt his resolution:—"Till I die  
"I will not remove my integrity from me; my  
"righteousness I hold fast and will not let it go;  
"my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live."

## SERMON XIV.



JOB X. 1.

*My soul is weary of my life.*

WITHOUT manifesting that impatience, which indicates a discontent unbecoming our dependant state, when under the chastising hand of God; we find from Job, the afflicted may utter their complaints, and vent their sorrows in the pathetic strains of lamentation. The miseries of human nature have caused the most pious and resigned amongst men, to breathe out their fervent wishes to lay down the load of life. When wearied out, the soul anxiously longs to be at rest; and after a long course of calamity or sickness, there are few who would wish to tread over again the thorny wilder-

ness of life—to endure its vicissitudes and sorrows—again undergo its consequential sufferings and its agonizing pains, which far overbalance whatever blessings we may meet with, though kindly intended to render the ills of life more easy to be borne.

“ My soul is weary of my life! my soul,” exclaims the melancholy Job, in reply to the unkind reproofs of his pretended friends, “ my soul longs “ for that moment when it shall lay aside this frail “ and perishable body, which has suffered and does “ now endure all the torturing pangs of disease; “ accompanied with the heart-rending reflections “ on the disasters I have experienced at the hand “ of the Lord; and which even you augment by “ your unmerciful upbraidings—miserable comforters are ye all.”

It is indeed a deplorable truth that few friends in the moment of affliction afford the balm of real consolation, or soothe the hour of distress with the genuine and necessary relief that can alone mitigate the anguish. Is it that man has not those feelings of sensibility that are alive to the dictates

of compassion, when he sees the companion, nay, perhaps the dearest friend of his heart, suffering the distresses incident to frail mortality? No! witness the throbbing bosom and the tearful eye, which plainly shew that man can feel for the calamities of others, and commiserate the pangs, he cannot but observe almost daily sustained by his fellow-creatures, heirs with him of the same corruptible nature—like him subject to diseases and pains, and in the end, destined victims to the iron grasp of inexorable death.

What real comforts we do enjoy in life, few as they are, spring from friendship—from the mutual interchange of kindnesses and endearments: but it is not in the power of human nature to take out the sting from every wound—to remove the cause of affliction, and give to the agonizing sufferer the healing remedy that shall effectuate a lasting cure. Under the severe complication of mental and corporeal disorders, enduring the torturing pains of an acute distemper; though the hand of friendship may assist and help the wretched sufferer to sustain his infirmity, and to bear up with tolerable

fortitude under the affliction: yet, in that trying hour he can alone find relief in that hope and confidence which *religion* ever infuses into the bosoms of those whose lives have been regulated by its dictates; and whose moments of excruciating pain are soothed by a mind enjoying the assured confidence, that the moment the pain shall bring the body to the subjection of death; the soul, weary of this life, shall soar to those regions of bliss, where pain and sorrow shall be felt no more.

Yes, my brethren! religion is the sufferer's only consolation: at that hour when every worldly comfort fails, and the offices of friendship, though administered with the tenderest hand, ease not the pangs of bodily anguish; religion will supply the necessary consolation, and what is more, no religion but ours can yield it so effectually.

Even in that extremity when the sufferer has no prospect of relief but in death—when the anguish is beyond imagination excruciating, and death seems only to linger, in order that the sufferings may be protracted, till nature, wearied out with pain, sinks exhausted and renders him an easier

victim; even *then*, religion can alone afford the sufferer a mitigation of his pain, by infusing into his mind those submissive virtues which christianity alone recommends.

Suppose the most grievous pains a lingering disease can inflict on the body, with incessant attacks, hourly weakening the shattered frame; while no hopes of remedy remain but in the cold arms of death: if the pains bring no symptoms but of a tardy dissolution; how must the sufferer need the consolation which religion can only supply, in order to the exercise of the meek virtue of patience?

In a christian, in whose bosom reigns pure devotion, and who is animated with the example of the prince of sufferers; the amiable virtue of resignation, under the acutest pangs of disease, never allows him to vent his grief in impatient murmurs: but his complaints breathe the pious wishes of a soul, anxious after that separation from a body; when his sufferings on earth shall terminate, and leave her unencumbered with flesh, to enter into the world of spirits, and mingle with the blessed inhabitants of heaven. Should the offices of friend-

ship, whether real or pretended, at that moment, when wearied with pain, the sufferer would fly for refuge to that help, where alone it can be found, be extended with officious zeal for his comfort, how natural is it to cry out with Job: “Are not my  
“ days few? Cease then and let me alone that I  
“ may take comfort a little, before I go whence I  
“ shall not return; even to the land of darkness and  
“ the shadow of death.” Or, in other words, are not the days I have now to live drawing to a speedy termination? Cease then your offers of a mere temporary consolation, and let me take comfort in those hopes of eternal happiness where alone it can be found; before I go whence I shall not return—even to the grave, the land of darkness and the shadow of death. For though obscurity for the present shuts up the prospect, and seems to forbid that any light should arise out of so impenetrable a darkness; still, as he afterwards answers to their continued reproaches; “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and in my flesh shall I  
“ see God:” thus manifesting his confidence in the

certainty, that after having passed through the land of darkness and the shadow of death, he should reach the presence of God, and behold him invested with all the effulgence of the Godhead.

Such are the hopes that can alone soothe the hour of sickness, and infuse resignation into the mind, even whilst the body suffers the tortures of some hopeless affliction. How dreadfully wicked then are they who would deprive the soul of this rich cordial at this last hour! There are two sorts of persons I would ever drive from the bed of sickness—the unbeliever and the fanatic; who, however opposite in principles, yet agree in completely destroying the reviving comforts of religion: the one by his disbelief, mocking at the hopes of a life after death; and the other, by his representations of the Almighty as an inexorable judge, intimidates the sinner by assuring him the gates of mercy are for ever shut against him.

But as the house of mourning has seldom any attractions for the infidel, our reflections here must be confined to the officious and misguided zeal of those fanatics who intrude into the chambers of

the sick, and by depicting the horrors of the sufferer's state as to his future destination, render him the hopeless victim of despair. In vain does religion represent the sceptre of mercy extended to the sinner, whose hopes in the tender mercies of his God, through the merits of his Redeemer, are for ever done away, and the enormity of his transgressions are painted in such aggravated colours, as despairing of forgiveness, he addresses his prayers to him as a Being clothed with vengeance, sitting on the throne of unrelenting justice; and not as the God whom religion represents as bestowing pardon and forgiveness to the sincerely penitent.

The most grievous addition to the torments of a dying bed, is the reflection that must harrass the mind, when the life, till that period, has been led in wickedness and folly—a neglect of God and religion: then indeed the aid of friends may be necessary, to remove from the mind the sense of its danger, when hanging on the verge of eternity: but this can only be temporary, for conscience will sting the sinner when sensible he justly merits the bodily pains he suffers, as a punishment of his for-

mer transgressions, and the intemperance of his youthful years.

Dreadful situation! Would we, my brethren! avoid a condition at once so burdensome to the soul already laden with iniquity, and at the same time so hazardous to its salvation, let us live in such a manner that we may not augment our sufferings, when it pleases God to extend our limbs on the bed of sickness. We have every reason to inspire us with the firmest resolution so to act, even from the moment we are capable of discerning good and evil; and we have rules easy to be understood, and as easy to be practised, would we but yield them the obedience of our early years! But alas! hurried on by the impetuosity of youth, we yield to the inclinations of sense, and run to the utmost length of those appetites, which, kept within the bounds of prudence, would yield us those rational pleasures, which harmonize the soul to a relish for what is temperate and chaste. Every passion given us by the God of nature, was meant to be indulged, and reason was appointed to be a restraint upon their gratification: but this being found insufficient,

the most excellent laws were given us for our governance, and would we but walk by their guidance, we should never be tempted to give the reins to our passions; to the subversion of health, and too often, it is feared, to the eternal destruction of the soul.

The great error of mankind in this respect is, the little attention that is paid to the dictates of reason or the precepts of the Gospel, till they feel the consequence of the unbounded gratification of their sensual appetites, in the languishment of some enfeebling disease; when every joint is racked with pain, and the whole frame is convulsed with insufferable agony, so as to threaten a speedy dissolution: then when hope is vanished, and the prospect is nearly closed from this world, the sinner flies to repentance as his last resource: but God, who only knows its sincerity, can duly appreciate its worth, as it may flow from a dread of punishment; and the sinner himself may be deceived, since recovery to health is denied him, and consequently no proof of its sincerity can be given: the hour of trial is past.

Is this a time, I would ask, to make our peace with God, when we recline our heads on the pillow of disquietude—when our limbs are tortured with the racking pains of an acute distemper, and our mental anguish is rendered more poignant by the reflection on a life led in the pursuit of every lawless indulgence? Surely we shall find enough to do to bear with firmness the disorders of that unhappy hour, without our having by repentance to seek our reconciliation with God.

In the thoughtless season of youth, when we “crown ourselves with rosebuds, and let no flower of the spring pass by:” when we indulge ourselves in the gratification of every passion, in the pursuit of a phantom, which either evades our embrace, or leaves a corroding sting that embitters the enjoyment. Did we but reflect on the indubitable consequences of our ungovernable indulgences—that a premature old age—an emaciated frame tottering with disease, or wringing under intolerable pain, would inevitably ensue from such unbounded licentiousness; we should perhaps listen to the dictates of reason, and learn so to govern our desires, so as

to keep them within the bounds of temperance and moderation.

But this is not the case; no youth pleads ignorance as to the certain consequences of his licentious conduct: but in all the madness of headstrong folly, he rushes forward in a course of thoughtless depravity, and soon, from his dissolute companions, imbibes the blasphemous opinions of infidelity; laughs at the counsels of experience, and ridicules the sage instruction of the moralist. Nor is the case, I fear, much better with men at a more advanced period of life. Seldom do we consider that in all human probability there is but a step betwixt us and death. This is an awful consideration it must be allowed: but is it not ourselves that make it so? For let us give it our most serious meditation, it amounts to no more than this—that, this moment we breathe, the next we may be no more. That we may soon and suddenly be cut off from this world; in which, though for the first few years of our entrance into it, it appeared strewed with roses—the flowers of the spring lay scattered round our path—our fancies decked every scene in the gaudiest colours, and

we fondly hoped for a continuance of that felicity on which we had fixed our affections. For this we toil—for this we waste the vigour of our years: and when we imagine every wish is about to be indulged, and our innocent desires gratified, a sudden accident blasts all our expectations; our schemes of comfort and of promised bliss vanish, and we find how vain the hope to build any permanent happiness on any thing this world can produce. Let riches, honour, pleasure, or whatever be the object, yet happiness dwells not in the attainment; nay, even in those pure, refined pleasures, founded in virtue, real happiness is never found. Seek her where you will, she eludes your search; and when you think you have her within your embrace, you find to your disappointment you have clasped a phantom in her stead. Then is there any thing that ought to startle us, when the consideration is forced upon us, by sickness, or any other event to which our nature is prone, that narrow is the space betwixt us and death? No, my brethren! if happiness is not to be found in any thing this world can produce, it is our wisest plan to search for it

in another, in order that, come soon or late, we may welcome the stroke that ushers us thither: only let us take care to live so as to be prepared for it, come when it will. We are not ignorant what we must do for this purpose! Thanks to the Almighty and his Son Jesus Christ, we have the best of precepts to observe; and to keep us in the right path, we have the brightest of examples to lead us to this future world, where real and permanent happiness alone is found: and what is more, my brethren! as happiness is seated in the mind; believe me, if you would taste of real pleasure on this side the grave, it is here alone to be found—in the consciousness of acting up to the dictates of religion. Its balm would render the most grievous sickness easy to be borne—would bring consolation in every disappointment; as the hope of future recompense awaiting our righteous deeds, would inspire us with fortitude in each trying hour. Sickness might urge us to complain of the weariness of life, or afflictions might wring our hearts, but could not shake our confidence in God; whose supporting grace would produce every comfort we are to expect, in looking

forward to that felicity, which is to be our greatest, best, and permanent reward.

Aware then of this, never, my brethren! never let us indulge in such gratifications as will destroy that serenity which arises from a temperate use of the enjoyments of this world. Let our lives be governed by those maxims that will ensure us this desirable tranquillity; that, when it shall please God, for the trial of our patience, through some painful disorder, to prepare us for the coming of death as a messenger to conduct us to his presence; we may find comfort from the retrospect of a life led in conformity to the dictates of wisdom and piety: so shall the acutest pangs of disease neither shake our fortitude, nor cause us for a moment to lose sight of those everlasting treasures, which are promised to those, who with patience and submission endure to the end.

Then, when “the soul is weary of its life”—when our strength fails, and we are in the last stage, and disquieted with every thing, how acceptable then is the sentence that summons us to another world! For though we walk through the

valley of the shadow of death, we need fear no evil, for God will be with us; his rod and his staff will comfort us. Then, if the friendly hand of some sympathizing mourner, over the pangs he sees us suffer, would be extended in the most effectual manner, let it be elevated in devotion to the Almighty, and the tongue be employed in joining our prayers; that our patience and fortitude may not fail; nor lose that recompense due to those whose trials have been severe, but whose submission to the afflicting hand of God, has exhibited the magnanimity of the christian hero; whose hopes lie beyond this sublunary world, and are occupied alone in anticipating the future enjoyment of glories— incomprehensible, unutterable, and eternal.

## SERMON XV.



LUKE XV. 22.

*Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son, was dead and is alive again—he was lost and is found.*

IN this parable our blessed Lord hath in a striking and appropriate manner, set forth the headstrong folly of youth, and its sad consequences. It was delivered to the Pharisees to represent the great condescension of God to the sincerely penitent, by exhibiting to them the favour with which the father here receives his prodigal son, after he had strayed from the paternal roof: and like the two preceding parables of the lost sheep and piece of money, was designed also to shew how much Heaven delights in the conversion of a sinner. “A certain man,”

says he, "had two sons; and the younger said unto  
"the father; father give me the portion of goods  
"that falleth to me: and he divided to them his  
"living."

With all that impetuosity which characterizes youth on their first entrance into life, and eager to enjoy the pleasures that enchant the senses at that inconsiderate age, he demands his share of what his father intended to give between him and his elder brother. The indulgent parent consents. "And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance in riotous living."

Flushed with the possession of his inheritance, that he might have no check from his father or friends; he journeys afar off, and in a distant country enters into all the vices of licentious prodigality. Intemperance, debauchery, and riot, soon waste the patrimony he received. "And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want." Poverty, the certain consequence of his thoughtless

extravagance now attacked him with all her “meagre train,” and became the more oppressive, as a famine began to rage through the land. Poverty, for which he was not prepared, even had no scarcity prevailed, would fall with double fury upon him. It is the ungovernable disposition of youth, not to consider the certain end of their unrestrained pursuit of pleasure, and that ruin must ensue when they have spent all: but thinking on the present gratification, the prodigal was blind to the future, till having squandered all his patrimony, he finds himself in a strange country, in a state of miserable poverty, aggravated by a scarcity that rendered it impossible for him to receive any relief, had he found any disposed to satisfy his wants. “And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into the fields to feed swine.”

Wretched, miserable state! Here let youth pause, and reflect on the effects of a riotous and wanton abuse of the gifts of fortune. What is poverty to those who have known no other state, but being born in the lowest condition, are fed with

the homeliest sustenance! They feel it not, nor know its bitterness, because habit hath rendered it familiar. But for him who had pampered his appetites with luxurious feasting and riotous living, poverty would come with such dreadful force, as would render his condition more miserable than even the brutes he was appointed to keep.—“ And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat.”

To what a deplorable state his boundless indulgence in vicious pursuits hath reduced him! In his extreme distress he was glad of any employment, no matter how disgusting, provided he could only satisfy the common cravings of nature; but even this is denied him, for he longed to satisfy his hunger with the very husks on which the swine fed: and yet, “ no man gave unto him,” no one pitied him, nor threw him a morsel of that food which a human creature might eat.

Such is the miserable state of the man, who has brought poverty on himself by his folly! Who will pity him who has wasted his substance in riotous living!—In all probability, the parta-

kers of his bounty when in prosperity;—those who contributed to his downfall and encouraged his extravagance, shunned him in his distress, and mocked at his calamity; nay, perhaps reproached him with the folly of which they had reaped the advantage. No wonder then when brought to his reflection he thus vented his grief: “How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go unto my father, and will say unto my father—father I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants.”

Here we have the prodigal’s return to a sense of his past extravagance, and we begin to perceive the scope and design of the parable. While our Lord describes the too great proneness of youth to quit the line of filial duty, and to run the mad career of vice and folly, till poverty comes with all its dire train of calamities, and brings him to a sense of his situation; when he adopts the resolution of returning to his father; he intimates that in a

similar manner when a sinner has forsaken his God, he hurries on in sin, till distress recalls him to a better judgment; when he resolves on amendment, and to return to his heavenly Father, from the path of whose commandments he had strayed.

It is observable that when distress had awakened in the prodigal a consciousness of his errors, the first thing that strikes him, is the offence that he has committed against God:—"Father I have sinned against heaven." Unhappy youth! this he should have thought of before he quitted his paternal abode; he would then have avoided the wretched situation to which he was reduced, and the stings of his conscience for having sinned against God.

The sincerity of his repentance is however apparent, from his conviction of having trespassed against heaven: and when a sinner feels a like remorse for his transgressions, and like him, adopts the resolution of returning to his duty, he may expect to be received into favour, and on his conversion will find that happy is the man whom a seasonable correction has brought to see the error

of his ways. It is by amendment only, and absolutely forsaking all manner of sin, that repentance can be proved to be real. The prodigal arose and went to his father, and with genuine humility thus acknowledges his unworthiness to be called his son: "Make me," cried he, "as one of thy hired servants."

Reduced as he was to the most abject condition a human being can possibly be; our Saviour, by this representation, shews that as it is only the most indigent state that will bring a prodigal to see the error of his ways: so it is only by affliction of one kind or other, a sinner will be brought to conceive just notions of his sin against God; and evince, by real amendment, his humility and penitence; which if sincere, behold the goodness of God represented by the father in the parable, who, when his son was yet a great way off, no sooner saw him than he had compassion on him, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him; scarcely allowing him leisure to declare his penitence for having forsaken him, and owning his humility and unworthiness: "Bring forth," cried he to his servants, "bring forth the

“ best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on  
“ his hand and shoes on his feet: and bring hither  
“ the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be  
“ merry: for this my son was dead and is alive  
“ again—he was lost and is found.”

How consonant to that mercy which the Almighty has ever delighted to shew towards the weak and frail creatures of his hand, is this representation! The history of his chosen people manifests this his gracious attribute in a thousand instances, through all the successive generations of their race. Ever prone to depart from his service and to rebel against his authority; yet, with what forbearance did he endure their continued provocations, and raised up his servants the prophets among them, to declare that his lovingkindness, his mercy, and longsuffering, would still be exercised towards them, if they would return to the Lord their God! But if not, these attributes of grace must give way to the judgments their repeated sins would draw on them, which at last came to pass. Whereas, had they obeyed his will, or shewn any symptoms of real amendment, our

Saviour shews them in this parable, they would have been accepted, as he represents the father welcomed his repentant son.

Whilst they were making merry at the return of the prodigal, his elder brother came from the fields; and when he learned the cause of the festivity, he was angry and refused to go in to partake of the mirth. His father came forth and entreated him to enter, but he answered—"Lo, these many years  
"do I serve thee, neither at any time have I trans-  
"gressed thy commandments, and yet thou never  
"gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my  
"friends: but as soon as this thy son was come,  
"which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou  
"hast killed for him the fatted calf."

This conduct of the elder brother, represents the self-righteous Pharisees, who, proud of their punctual observance of the ceremonial duties of the law, were vexed at any favour being shewn to the penitent, abandoning their past transgressions. No censure is passed on them for their strict performance of these rites, but the Father himself condescends to invite them in: and after shewing

them how much heaven delights in the penitence of a sinner, leaves the impression on their minds, that it was left to themselves to accept or not of the still-proffered invitation.

Thus were the Pharisees covertly reprov'd by our Lord for their vanity, in claiming a merit in their exact fulfilment of certain ritual laws, which were not indeed to be left undone, but had no value in comparison to the duties of the moral law. They boasted of their performance and minute obedience to all the ceremonial injunctions of Moses, and therefore arrogated to themselves a superior, and indeed an almost sole right to the favour of heaven; and were beyond measure astonished and offended at our Lord's doctrine, in setting before them the infinite love of God to those unhappy wanderers from the path of love and duty: but who, in all the sincerity of true repentance, turned to him with humility, and fixed resolutions to continue steadfast in future, in all the ways of God's commandments. In this reproof, our Lord shews them how much God delights in those, who, with sentiments of pity and compassion, having witnessed the errors

of their fellow-creatures, can rejoice when they see them return to duty, and share with them in the kindness of the Lord. These generous feelings do honour to human nature, and are held more estimable in the sight of God, than'all the boasted righteousness of mere ceremonial duties.

As the Jews were designated by the elder brother, so were the Gentiles by the younger. The Pharisees well knew the drift of our Saviour in all his parables, and therefore felt more deeply the preference he appeared to give on all occasions to the Gentiles. But still, to their nation did heaven incline to be indulgent, as the concluding words of the parable denote, being the answer of the father to the petulant remonstrance of the elder brother:—"Son thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine; it was meet that we should make merry; for this thy brother was dead and is alive again—was lost and is found." All that I ever intended thee shall yet be thine, only accept of the invitation I now give thee, and come, partake of that joy, which surely is necessary to shew on the recovery of thy long-lost brother, who has

been these many years estranged from the love I bore him—has long forsaken my protection, and corrupted himself by following the bent of his evil inclinations; but has now returned to meet that paternal forgiveness, his real repentance assuredly merits.

There is one thing in this parable, well worthy of our observation, as it sets forth the kindness of heaven to the Gentile nations in an extraordinary degree, even whilst lost in such profound ignorance and blindness, as to clothe their Gods with all the infirmities of human nature; yet did the Almighty choose the faithful Abraham to convey the promised blessing of a Redeemer to all mankind: and for that purpose kept his posterity a distinct people, by peculiar laws, ceremonial observances, and rigid rules, necessary to preserve them from mixing with the other nations of the earth. The Gentiles, whilst this benevolent design was carrying on, wandered in the grossest darkness: an imperfect ray of light did sometimes break in upon them, but it was so obscured by the mists of ignorance, that it only served to bewilder them the more. Lost in

every sensual indulgence, and ignorant of the means to extricate themselves from the labyrinth of error that entangled them, had they even been sensible of their situation; they had no expectation—no prospect of any help, and consequently no knowledge of the merciful design of heaven towards them, till the star arose in the east, to disperse the shades of darkness that enveloped them, and made way for the Sun of righteousness, to shed his effulgence on all the nations of the earth.

How applicable then is this representation of the heathen nations, to that deplorable state, set forth by our Saviour, of the younger brother in the parable! In the reception of whom, our Lord intimates to the by-standing Jews, that notwithstanding the whole world lay thus in wickedness, and possessed no knowledge of the true God; yet, to them would he manifest his kindness—would turn to them with the eye of compassion; and though he had often corrected them for their sins: yet, as to them had never been manifested any knowledge relating to his being and perfections, as had been to the Jews; he would, when wearied out by their

incessant provocations, rejection of his covenant, and means of redemption; vouchsafe to the Gentiles who sat in error, the light of his countenance, as they would welcome the day spring from on high, that dispelled the mists of ignorance, and cling with steady hold to that salvation the Jews rejected.

But the most important doctrine we learn from this parable is, that when the sinner thus returns to God, sincerely penitent for his past transgressions, he will be accepted. Encompassed with dangers and temptations that assail us from all quarters at all ages; seldom have we fortitude to resist them, particularly in youth. At that incautious age, we yield to the impetuous torrent of our passion, and are borne down the stream, without one effort to escape. It is the same in manhood: although urged by numberless calls to secure both themselves and others from the casualties to which all are liable: yet, regardless of these, how often do we see men still rush to those dangers, and even court those temptations which assailed them in their earlier days, and thus plunge others, who

may unfortunately be dependant on their support, into that misery they have with intemperance, folly, and irresolution brought upon themselves. Nor is old age in general, I fear, chargeable with less indiscretion: instead of that fortitude and wisdom which experience teaches, we see them, too often, frequent those scenes of riot and intemperance, that tempted them in the unthinking season of youth, and the less excusable age of manhood.

Happy then are they, who, on their entrance on the stage of active life, though they may give way for a time to the violence of their passions, yet learn from the salutary correction of some adverse circumstance, to discover their error before it be too late; and have fortitude, like the prodigal, to adopt the resolution of returning to the path of duty: a welcome more joyful awaits them, than all the riotous mirth that surrounds the licentious board of intemperate festivity; attended with that peace and serenity, which must flow from an indulgent father's readiness to receive them: and to greet their return with every demonstration of joy that can evince how much the sincerely penitent may expect pardon and acceptance.

Let them then continue stedfast through life in the way to which they have returned, as assured of their heavenly Father's love, who will guide them with his counsel and support them in death. Carry then your thoughts beyond those transient delights, that in this present state pall in fruition, and leave us still anxious after novel pleasures; and stretch your imagination to those joys, when the sincerely penitent, reconciled to his God, is summoned to quit his frail tabernacle of flesh, and to enter on a happiness that can never satiate nor ever cloy. Then shall the angelic choir greet his welcome to the abodes of bliss with sweetest strains of seraphic melody, till heaven resounds with joy, and thousands mingle their voices in praise of God, and of the *Lamb*, whose blood shed on the cross, "has taken away the sins of the world."

## SERMON XVI.



JOB v. 26, 27.

*Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in, in his season. Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it and know thou it for thy good.*

THESE are the words of Eliphaz the Temanite, one of the three friends of Job, who came to console him under the manifold afflictions he was then suffering. He is here speaking of the happy termination of the miseries of those whom God corrects, and after enumerating the blessed effects of these chastisements, he assures Job that he “shall come to his grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in, in its season. Lo this,” says he, “we have searched it,” or examined into it, and find that God for the most part crowns the afflictions of men with the honours of a long life;—“so

“it is, hear” or attend thou to “it, and know thou  
“it for thy good;” or rather for thy benefit.

The Jewish people being chiefly occupied in husbandry or in rural occupations; many are the allusions in Scripture, where the periods of human life are compared to the varying seasons of the revolving year: but the time of harvest seems to have presented to the inspired writers so just an emblem, that they have used it on several occasions, in a manner which strikes us with its propriety. We read in Joel—“Put in the sickle for the harvest is ripe;” that is, cut down those sinners that are ripe for judgment. In like manner, Jeremiah prophesies—“The time of Babylon’s harvest is come;” or in other words, the time when she should be cut down. And likewise our Saviour speaking of the last day, compares it to the time of harvest, when his Father shall send his angels as his reapers, to gather up the wheat into his garner, and to burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. In the text, Eliphaz compares old age as the recompense of past afflictions, to a shock of corn coming in, in its season, full ripe, and as in the

time of harvest, bending down to the sickle, with the weight of its golden grain.

Many are the promises of God in Scripture, of long life: not to mention the lives of those fathers who lived antecedent to the flood; before God declared that the age of man, at its utmost extent, should be an hundred and twenty years; we find that to the favourites of heaven this promise was fulfilled. To Abraham, God said—"Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace, and shalt be buried in a good old age:" and accordingly we find that when "he gave up the ghost, he died" at the age of an hundred and seventy-five, "an old man, and full of years, and was gathered to his people." Isaac lived to an hundred and eighty years; his son Jacob to an hundred and forty-seven; Joseph his son to an hundred and ten years. Moses died at the age of an hundred and twenty, and Joshua at an hundred and ten. And of Job we read, that after he had passed through his afflictions, he lived an hundred and forty years. From all which we gather, that old age has been frequently a blessing with which God has favoured his chosen servants.

But it is to be considered that it was a blessing peculiarly granted to good men in the early ages of the world, before the luxuries of succeeding generations were known: their food was simple, their exercise the labour of the field. Temperate, frugal, and delighting in the healthy occupation of husbandry, they experienced the happy effects of their moderation and abstemiousness. "Few and evil," says the patriarch Jacob to Pharoah, "have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage." Barzillai, the Gileadite, after he had seen David over Jordan, on his return to reassume the throne of Israel, which his rebellious son Absalom had usurped: on being urged by the king to go up to Jerusalem, thus excuses himself in words which shew, that although old age may be sometimes a blessing, yet it is oftener attended with its consequential infirmities. "I am this day," says he, "fourscore years old, and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men

“and singing women? Wherefore then should thy  
“servant be a burden unto my lord, the king?”

This is a true picture of those unhappy infirmities which usually attend on old age. It is true there have been persons who have retained their faculties to a longer term than fourscore years, as in the case of Caleb the son of Jephunna:—“I am  
“this day,” says he, addressing Joshua for the inheritance of Hebron, which the Lord God had promised him—“I am this day fourscore and five years  
“old. As yet, I am as strong this day as I was  
“in the day that Moses sent me,” (to spy out the land;) “as my strength was then, so is my strength  
“now for war, both to go out and to come in.” But such instances are rare in comparison to those which prove the truth of the assertion in the psalm appointed for the burial service:—“The days of our  
“years are threescore years and ten, and though men  
“be so strong that they come to fourscore years, yet  
“is their strength then, but labour and sorrow.”

But not to speak of the natural infirmities of old age, so feelingly expressed by Barzillai, which but too well verify the observation of Moses; let us ra-

ther advert to what Job has said of human life:—  
“ Man that is born of a woman, is but of few days  
“ and full of misery.” Few in comparison of the  
ages of many of the patriarchs certainly, are the  
days of men upon earth: but Job meant this  
as a general observation upon human life, that  
short as it was, little else but misery attended it.  
A remark unhappily, when he spoke, verified in  
himself.

In the full meridian of his prosperity, when “ his  
“ oxen were plowing, and the asses were feeding  
“ beside them, the Sabeans fell upon them and  
“ took them away, and slew all his servants,”  
but he who brought the sad tidings. While the  
messenger was relating this intelligence, another  
came and said—“ The fire of God is fallen from  
“ heaven, and hath burnt up the sheep and the  
“ servants, and consumed them, and I only am  
“ escaped.” A third messenger now came and  
declared—“ The Chaldeans had fallen upon his  
“ camels and carried them away, and had slain  
“ all his servants, save himself to relate the sad  
“ event.”

Great were these losses undoubtedly, but not wholly irreparable: future industry—the aid of friends—the compassion of others, and the prudence of dependants, might probably restore them in part; but the following disaster few parents, I should think, can read and not feel for this additional misfortune to the unhappy Job:—“Thy  
“ sons and thy daughters,” said the herald of this melancholy catastrophe, “were eating and drink-  
“ ing wine in their elder brother’s house, and be-  
“ hold there came a great wind from the wilderness,  
“ and smote the four corners of the house, and it  
“ fell upon the young men, and they are dead.”

Never could the feelings of a father receive a severer stroke! Every child cut off at the same moment, and snatched from his arms by as calamitous a circumstance as can well be conceived. Yet this eminent pattern of true patience, in the midst of this complication of disasters—the loss of all his wealth, his children, and rank amongst the great men of the east; yet with unexampled submission, plunged as he was into the most wretched poverty and distress, “he arose and rent his man-

“ He and shaved his head, and fell down on the  
“ ground and worshipped, and said, naked came  
“ I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I  
“ return thither: the Lord gave and the Lord hath  
“ taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!”

It was in this extremity that his three friends came to condole with him. Silent they sat seven days and seven nights, paying a due regard to his sorrows; when Job opened his mouth, and wished the day to perish on which he was born: he then praises the still quietness of the sleep of death, and complains of life on account of the troubles which were come upon him. Eliphaz, who appears to be the chief of the three friends, opened his answer with a sharp rebuke of Job for want of religion; falsely deducing this inference from the calamities incidental to mankind, that God does not permit them to fall on any, but for the punishment of some latent sin: thus shewing the little knowledge men then had of the dispensations of the Almighty, who, as often permits afflictions to fall on the righteous for the trial of their virtues, as he does on the guilty for the punishment of sin. After

some further observation that God is to be regarded in affliction, as he intended his happiness in the end; he declares that God would grant him many blessings, but especially, says he, “thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in, in its season.” He then pronounces it to be a truth, confirmed by experience, that God grants a long life to those he has afflicted: “We have searched it,” says he, “and so it is, hear it,” therefore, and attend to it, and “know thou it for thy good.” That is, be comforted and happy from this knowledge which we have found to be fact, that God will grant thee a long life, in recompense for the chastisement with which he has corrected thee.

Was this in every respect true, that the disastrous events we meet with in life would be remunerated by length of days, we should have some grounds to hope, that if we imitated the patience of Job under afflictions; we might, with the permission of God, outlive our misfortunes, and like him be restored to our former happiness. But alas! in the observation on what happens to man in the

present day; we can neither discern the fortitude nor the patience that shall merit the favour of length of days. So far from it, that when a man is beset with misery, he loses that energy of mind essential to his health, and he gradually sinks under the pressure of woe, and without one effort to escape, drops amidst his sorrows into an untimely grave.

Could we follow the example and patience of this extraordinary man! nay, could we practise the submissive duties, exemplified to us in a more perfect degree, by our divine Redeemer! God in his goodness, might recompense our resignation by raising us from our depressed condition; and old age be granted us, to set forth his kindness and our worth to this blessing. But this, such is the weakness of our nature, is, for the most part impossible; yet still we should attempt it, and never give way to despondency. The desire of long life is natural to man; and by preserving our minds tranquil, when reduced by misfortune to the depths of poverty; we shall be able with greater steadiness, to practise the duties of that state, as to render

our emergence therefrom the object of God's peculiar care; who may grant us a longer continuance on earth, after we have been taught by affliction those humble virtues, upon which those are to be raised, which are required of us, when we are restored to a higher sphere of life.

When we suffer from the persecuting malice of enemies—when we are brought by calamity to the wretched state of absolute poverty—when we are attacked by sickness, and we suffer under the violent assaults of some racking distemper, or the pangs of excruciating pain—when we feel the sorrows that more than all others afflict the soul, as the loss of friends and relatives. Under these deplorable calamities, as they are the certain portion of human nature; we should manifest a steady reliance on God, and submit without a murmur to the afflictions he is pleased to lay upon us; because they are intended to work in us both obedience to his will, and submission to his providence; and so justify his bringing us out of distress, and prolonging our days on earth, that we may stand forth as living examples of his mercy; and in the end, bow like the

bending corn to the hand of the reaper, loaded with the fruit of good works—respected by the old and honoured by the young.

But should life be prolonged to an advanced age in these times, when our food and manner of living is totally different from the simplicity that reigned at the frugal board of the ancient Israelites; it certainly may in some cases be considered as a blessing: yet, we are forced to acknowledge it more frequently, only prolonging the time when we are least able to bear up against the infirmities of nature. When we contemplate the usual attendants on old age, as the loss of our faculties (which oftener is the case than otherwise) and the gradual decline of strength; even if no intemperance nipped the bud of health in our early days, nor blasted our more vigorous years: yet, we sensibly feel that a long life only renders us more and more susceptible of the natural decays of age; and lying on the bed of sickness, weak and helpless, we then feel, that the days of our pilgrimage being nearly finished, our decline is hastening to its completion, and we look with anxiety to that moment, when death shall cut the

thread of life, and bury all our infirmities in the silent tomb.

This is the wish of nature merely flowing from a solicitude to be at the place where the weary are at rest, and infirmities are no longer known; and we are ready to exclaim with the wise son of Sirach—"O death! acceptable is thy sentence unto  
"him whose strength faileth; that is now in the  
"last age, and to whom all things are troublesome."

But even in this situation, lamentable indeed as it must be acknowledged to be; and afflicting to our consideration as the natural consequence of protracted old age; yet, we may find a rich consolation—a consolation which nothing else can inspire in the soothing reflection—that although we are about to lie down and mingle with our kindred dust; yet, in our christian pilgrimage, through all the various afflictions and changing scenes of life, we have taken care that our souls shall ascend to those heavenly regions, whither our prayers and praises are gone before; even to the throne of the Most High, where our good deeds are had in everlasting remembrance; and

where the splendid robe of snowy white, and the glorious crown of immortality, await to recompense our piety through life's probationary scenes of trouble and of woe.

Indeed the blessing of a long life would lose much of its efficacy, if unattended with a mind serene and peaceable—a mild and gentle composure to soothe its decline. If temperate have been the days of our youth—if moderation in the pursuit of sensual indulgences have marked our more vigorous years—if the cares and anxieties after the superfluous enjoyments of life, beyond the easily-satisfied wants of nature, have not wearied out the prime of youth, nor exhausted the strength of manhood; then indeed we may expect “to come  
“to the grave in a full age, as a shock of corn  
“cometh in, in his season.”

But if on the contrary we have brought on a premature old age, with its attendant symptoms that announce its decay, by any indulgences in the excesses of our licentious inclinations, that too often both characterize the unbridled passions of youth, and the more confirmed practice of intemperate

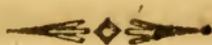
manhood; we must expect to be cut off long before we reach that period of life, pronounced to be the term of the man of temperance and sobriety.

We see then, my brethren! our course of life pointed out to us. Let us be temperate with regard to the indulgences, and not over anxious about the conveniences of life. "Let your moderation be known unto all men." It is the surest method to attain that desirable tranquillity which is the delight of old age—the comfort of our sinking years, and our best support when about to enter the darksome valley of the shadow of death.

Let us never be unwilling to cast our eyes to this scene, which has closed from our view the mortal remains of our relatives and friends, whom God has long spared to us. If in their deaths they resembled "a shock of corn that cometh in, in its season," let us take care that ours be similar. There is no one who hears me, but would wish to sink gradually to the grave "in a full age;" attended with that undisturbed serenity—that unruffled state of mind that springs from a bosom at peace with God, with the world, and with itself. Sure I am

this is the genuine wish of all! But then, let us live with such circumspection, and with such a religious sense of our mortality, as to preserve our minds in that tranquil state; that as strangers to all unruly wills and sinful affections, our peace cannot be disturbed by the petty vexations of a world that we must soon leave, and which may as soon perish as we do. Let us then cast our eyes to that world which is eternal—where felicity knows no bounds, and time is lost in an everlasting round of happiness—immortal and unchangeable. THEN, whether our continuance be short or long upon this earth, which is fast mouldering to its original nothing; we shall calmly lie down in peace, and with resigned composure, welcome that stroke which is to introduce us on the morning of the last great day, to the friends already departed; when, with them we shall be admitted to all those joys, which are at God's right hand, through all the unlimited ages of a glorious and happy eternity.

## SERMON XVII.\*



2 CHRONICLES, XX. 20.

*Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established: believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.*

THESE words were spoken by Jehosophat to the assembled congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, after he had proclaimed a fast, on the account of the combined armies of the Moabites and Ammonites coming against them: and so sincere were the king and his subjects in their repentance; that the Spirit of God, by the mouth of the prophet Jahaziel, encouraged them neither to be afraid nor dismayed, for the Lord would be with them. The pious monarch, having himself a perfect reliance on this promise of God, endeavoured to inspire the same confidence in his subjects:—"Hear me, O

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\* Preached on the Fast-Day, 1809, and published by request.

“Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established: believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.”

As the God of the Israelites is the God of the Christians, and “with whom there is no variable-ness or shadow of turning,” we, my brethren! may rest assured, that if on the sincere repentance of the children of his chosen and faithful Abraham, when the horrors of war threatened them, he promised them success in the approaching conflict; *we*, who are the disciples of that Son he sent for the redemption of mankind, will be defended and supported by him, in the war in which we are engaged, if our repentance be equally as sincere.

When we look back on the war, in which we have been so long engaged, from its commencement to the present period, and reflect how little prospect there appears of its soon coming to a final termination; melancholy indeed is the consideration to the feeling mind, that the blessings of peace are to all human conjecture, as far distant as ever. But let it be deeply engraven on all who hear me, that peace is never bestowed but in proportion to

the deservings of the people. National sins require a national punishment: and if we attentively consider the whole progress of this war, we cannot fail to discern the chastising hand of the Lord, smiting the nations for their iniquities, and bringing them under his appointed scourge, till they shall learn that the Most High strikes in mercy, and corrects in kindness, to bring men to repentance.

What nation in this quarter of the globe has not in some degree felt this scourge? Almost all have bowed to the yoke of the oppressor: and what is the most lamentable consideration, and deserves our serious reflection, is, that the hand of the Lord is lifted up, and his arm made bare against those who profess the religion of his Son Jesus Christ; at whose birth the celestial harbingers proclaimed that he brought "good-will towards men."

Alas! that the followers of him who brought this blessing down to mankind, when he came on the errand of mercy, should frustrate the kind intentions of the Deity, by suffering their "unruly wills and affections" to obtain such a mastery over

them, as to cause him to withhold his lovingkindness, till his correction has brought them to a due sense of his good-will towards them. What greater punishment can he inflict on any nation, than to suffer the flames of war to be enkindled by their own tempestuous passions? The consequences are dreadful, and are too well known for me to harrow up your feelings by a description of those scenes which follow the devastation of the sword. Then let me conjure you, look well to your own bosoms; search deep for that presumptuous sin, which has got the dominion over you; so shall you be innocent from the great offence.

Sure I am, that every one who is not utterly depraved, acknowledges the necessity of a reformation in himself, and would wish to see a general amendment in the morals of all around him; yet feels not in himself that fortitude to resist the torrent of corruption, that has tainted the manners of all from the highest to the lowest. Known unto God alone are the hearts of men, and to him in general only is manifest the sin that so easily besets them; therefore it depends on themselves to obtain from

God such strength and support, as shall enable them to overcome their secret failing, which, we will charitably suppose, oftener springs from a want of fortitude, than a real disposition to commit sin. Let a man be sincere in his repentance, and strive to gain this mastery, by praying to God to aid his endeavours, and he will soon be enabled to put his good resolutions in practice. Let every individual do this, and the national transgressions of which we complain will speedily vanish, and for which God's judgment hangs with a sore displeasure on the land. A long protracted war seems to increase with time, and I am apprehensive our reformation has not been in due proportion. The sword still threatens to devour, and its edge made sharp by our iniquities, seems to have received the commands of God to slay and destroy, till the vengeance of heaven is satisfied, when it shall return to the scabbard in peace.

To attest the sincerity of our repentance—to render us worthy of the consequences of war being removed from our land, we must abandon those deeds which have caused the calamities we feel and deplore.

We must pray to Almighty God to enable us by his spirit to persevere in our amendment, that no worldly temptation may draw our attention from the pursuits of virtue and religion, as convinced no other conduct will render us deserving of the invaluable blessings of peace. O then, my brethren! let our prayers be ardent, our repentance sincere, and our reformation real; and then we may justly hope the Lord will be gracious unto us—*establish* us in the blessings we enjoy—*prosper* our arms with success—crown us with victory in the end, and give to our island a permanent peace.

Many and grievous are the sins committed against our better judgment. The observation of every person in this congregation will bear witness to the truth of this assertion; and in compassion to the frailties of his fellow-creatures, will join in the prayers of this day—bewail the general depravity, and earnestly entreat God to avert his heavy displeasure.

But the most weighty charge against us, is, that which the enemy at the commencement of the war effectually propogated; and endeavoured to

disseminate the same blasphemous opinions through other nations; which is the very reverse to the commendatory words of Jehosophat in the text, viz. "Belief in God and his prophets:" I mean the charge of *infidelity*, which, amongst christians is to be understood as comprehending the disbelief of a God, and the revelation of his Son, as declared by the prophets and apostles.

The men who wish to rise on the downfall of kingdoms, are well aware of the advantage to be obtained by spreading abroad the dreadful doctrines of infidelity. The prince of darkness, for ever at enmity with the felicity of mankind, so moulds the dissatisfied spirits of the turbulent to his purpose, as to give them the hardiness of unbelief. The first step is to enkindle in the minds of such men, whose superficial knowledge of revealed truths is wavering, weak, and imperfect; many doubts respecting their divine authority, and their efficacy to procure salvation. In ancient times, amongst heathen nations, where religion was decorated with show and magnificence, and the volumes of incense rolling up before a senseless idol, clouded the eyes of the

credulous worshippers; many no doubt were able to expose the vanity of such ostentatious ceremonies. But when the God of the Hebrews exhibits himself, where is the man, who, on looking unprejudiced through the records of the revealed will, is not ready to cry out as the Israelites did, when they beheld the fire descend from heaven and lick up the water that ran round the trench of the altar which Elijah had built—“*The Lord, he is the God, the Lord, he is the God.*”

The inspired writers of the sacred volume represent this God as a just, holy, and perfect Being—abundant in mercy and lovingkindness to the children of men; the creatures of his bounty, fed by his hand, and supported by his power. As a spirit who dwells in light unapproachable; far as his eye extends his Providence protects, and blessings flow wherever his presence fills. Senseless must that man be who can doubt this truth. Look around you; who sustains you through infancy—through manhood, and even to old age: view the profusion spread abroad for the support of life, the gratification of sense, and the supply of appetite: consider

how in dignity of sentiment and elevation of thought you rise superior to brutal instinct: consider these things, and you will own with the Psalmist, that none but “*a fool could say in his heart—there is no God.*”

This is the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength; this God is our God, in whom you are required to place your trust and confidence: but as you cannot develop the mystery that surrounds him, “believe his prophets,” examine their records, and from the fall of your first parent to the redemption, how wonderful—how sublime are the means which are adopted to bring about the salvation of man! The wisdom of mortals cannot fathom it; to the power of God it must unquestionably be attributed. If then, God be thus infinite in power, unsearchable in wisdom, and boundless in mercy (as he who allows there is a God, grants him these attributes) why should we doubt any part of what he has revealed, of the means by which the consequences of the fall were prevented—his justice vindicated—Satan defeated—and men restored to immortality?

In a christian congregation, I should imagine I abused the sense of the meanest individual, by advancing arguments in the defence of the being of a God, or of the divine authenticity of revelation. I shall therefore only warn you against such a system of unbelief, as must inevitably produce the most dreadful consequences, and create that confusion and disorder, so fatal to the peace and happiness of kingdoms, was such unhappily to prevail. When men are once instigated by the spirit of evil, they begin to attack the foundation of religion—dispute its origin—and, in all the phrenzy of perverted reason, hesitate not to deny the divinity of the Author of their religion; and, as one step leads to another, the denial of the Saviour paves the way to the utter rejection of a God, and a blasphemous defiance of his providence. The disbelief of a Deity once established—all the sacred ties between man and man—between the subject and government are quickly dissolved. An oath, which binds the one to the other, is set at nought; and he who dares to disbelieve the God who created him, and the Redeemer who died for him, soon regards the

obligations of society as no restraint upon his licentious and ambitious projects; and rapine, plunder, and massacre, ravage and lay nations desolate. By such means as these, the schemes of Satan are perfected, and in the wreck and downfall of religion and subordination, the turbulent, the cruel, and the prophane riot on devastation; and rise to the height of their inordinate ambition, by the universal destruction of every moral and religious obligation.

These principles manifestly caused the first disturbances in *France*—raised the standard of rebellion—enkindled the flames of civil war, and produced such a catalogue of crimes, as the annals of the most barbarous age would blush to record. As they endeavoured to spread their diabolical tenets in this kingdom, and the unbelieving, who are ever the most disloyal subjects, met them half way: we may in some degree conjecture what would have been our condition, had not the vigilance of government prevented those principles from spreading, by giving a timely check to their influence. We should then have lost the best form of govern-

ment ever sent to bless mankind in his civilized state; and no longer have enjoyed that religious institute, which the Son of God came down to propagate, in order to teach us the true and only way to the blessedness of heaven.

The manifold blessings we enjoy from our excellent constitution might alone have warranted, one would have thought, a repugnance to principles so destructive of all order, and so fatal to the interests of society. Happy are we if we knew but the value of those blessings we enjoy! The produce of our honest industry is protected on all sides; and surely no man in his senses would lend a hand to overturn the fence that guards his property from the first depredator, who, in his system of equalization, naturally regards that property as his own. While justice holds the sword, the arm of violence cannot hurt you: but if from her sacred hand it is once wrested by the demagogues of faction; your liberty—your property, and every thing that is dear will soon be trampled under foot. Look then to that government which shields you and yours from violence like this—it was purchased by the

blood of your ancestors—as such regard it with reverence—it is the boast of Britain and the envy of the world.

But the blessings of our religion, pure and reformed as it is from the doctrines of the Roman Church, ought above every other object to hold the principal place in our esteem. Here the wisdom of God is manifested in simplicity, and the wonders of his love unfolded in a language intelligible to all. The doctrines of christianity breathe harmony and concord; and if the daring designs of infatuated men would but yield to their influence, the desolating sword would return to its sheath, and the olive of peace spread its branches over our isle.

To conclude, from the words of the text we learn the conditions upon which the Jews were to expect an establishment in the blessings they enjoyed, and prosperity in the cause in the which they were embarked; viz. “*A belief in God and in his prophets.*” Surely then, I may securely depend on the same belief from christians: but lest a spirit of infidelity should have possessed the mind of any one; let me conjure that person, whoever he be, not to enter

into covenant with the enemies of his salvation; nor to throw away his hopes of happiness in this world, or in that which is to come. How wretched, how miserable must that man be at the approach of death! No prospect beyond the grave to console him in his dying moments; but the assured conviction, which must and will strike him at that hour in its full force, that he is about to appear before that God he has denied, and that Saviour he has rejected.

But above all, my brethren! to evince the sincerity of our repentance, let us amend our lives; and whatever we find amiss in the review, let us act with better caution; let us cease to do evil and learn to do well. By so doing, we shall not only act as good christians and good subjects, but be entitled to a place in that better world, where the restless passions of men will not disturb our peace, but endless felicity and joy flourish for evermore.

## SERMON XVIII.



1 TIMOTHY III. 16.

*And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh—justified in the spirit—seen of angels—preached unto the Gentiles—believed on in the world—received up into glory.*

**BLESSED** is the man who with confidence in its promises, looks into the *word of God*, that he may learn therein, “to walk in all the commandments of God blameless!” and whose piety and humility prompt him to adore his gracious purposes towards the children of men;—his wisdom in creation—his mercy in redemption—and his goodness in the promise of endless felicity, in recompense of his faith and obedience.

With this view alone, my brethren! may we ever unfold the pages of the sacred volume! Far be

it from us to cavil at his decrees—dispute his ordinances—and set up our finite judgment in competition with the wisdom of the Eternal. Yet this is daily done; and man, presumptuous man! ever blindly ignorant where his happiness is most concerned, reads but to wrest the Scriptures from their obvious import—refuses to acknowledge their divine authenticity—scoffs at what God has thought proper to reveal—denies the Holy Spirit to have guided the pen of the prophets and apostles—and in words as disrespectful as Festus spoke to Agrippa, talk “of *one Jesus* who was dead, and whom Paul “affirmed to be alive.”

When the Almighty had finished the creation of all things wherein there is life; and had ordained them to inhabit the globe he had spoken into form, and beautified with the sun, the moon, and all the stars—“He created man in his own *image*, after his *likeness*.” Not that he was formed in the similitude of any body, we can be so gross as to suppose the Almighty can have, for “God is a spirit.” No! “He created man for immortality,” says the wise Solomon, “and made him to be *an image* of

“his own eternity.” This was the resemblance—this was the *likeness* after which he was formed: and as such he was “made a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and worship”—appointed to hold an intermediate station between the spiritual and animal world; over the latter of which, he was to hold universal dominion.

From the superior intellectual endowments of man may fairly be inferred his immortality.

Moses having, in the first chapter of Genesis, given a general view of the works of creation; judged the exalted privileges God had bestowed on this lord of the lower world, should be more particularly detailed; his nature shown to be perfect, and his happiness complete; in order that his disobedience might be set forth in its true light, and the mercy of God conspicuous to all gainsayers. He, therefore, in the second chapter introduces the Almighty, after he had formed man of the dust of the earth—“Breathing into his nostrils the breath of life”—infusing into him that living soul—that sentient, percipient principle, which he endowed with such rare and intellectual qualities;

such a freedom of will and action as was consistent with a rational and moral being, who, by comprehending and obeying the will of his Creator, could alone prove his worth to enjoy that incorruptible state and supreme felicity, which, before his fall, he possessed by his bounty.

The body itself is only to be considered as an instrument to convey either mediately or immediately to the soul, by means of its several organs, the sensations of *feeling, tasting, smelling, hearing, and seeing*; which being communicated to the nerves, are thence carried to the brain; which has induced many to place there the seat of the soul; when it is manifest, that, as it is not distinct from that being, which every individual calls himself, so it consequently pervades the whole sensitive man. But further than this, we ought not to step, without taking the Holy Scriptures along with us for our guide; as beyond this all is intellectual: and thus far the brute creation can also go; nay, in the acuteness of some of the senses they surpass us. God has wisely ordered it should be so; for mere sensation is sufficiently adequate for all the

purposes of mere animal life: but not for man—  
“to whom the breath of the Almighty gave life,”  
and “from whose inspiration came wisdom;”  
teaching him more “than the beasts of the earth,  
“and making him wiser than the fowls of heaven.”

From this it is evident that the soul is not distinct from that vital principle, which animates both man and brute. It is the error of supposing man to be compounded of two distinct substances, that has led to such gross and palpable absurdities as ever disgraced the page of philosophical disquisition. In man, this principle is enriched with such mental powers of understanding—such noble energies of a superior kind, as is suited to a rational and spiritual, and consequently an accountable and immortal spirit. But this living principle in the brute, when it can no longer be supplied through the instrumentality of the organs of its body, with what served for all the purposes of life; loses its existence with it, and both perish together.

From the works of creation, we may likewise infer his immortality.

When we consider the beauty, regularity, and

wonderful contrivance of this globe, which the Lord God Omnipotent has made, and placed with other systems in the vast extent of illimitable space, to measure the day and the night, as it revolves self-balanced on its axis: and that, whilst it runs its annual course in an elliptical orbit; it preserves, by an opposing attraction of the sun, and its own natural tendency to fly off from its centre, an uniform distance, so as to receive both heat and light, and to dispense their benefits in harmonious succession through the seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter.

When we consider also the globe itself, as divided into continent, seas, islands, mountains, hills, valleys, wood and plain, springs and rivers, and all that variety of verdure that covers its surface; the whole and every part thereof formed for the use and benefit of highly-favoured man: and consider besides, the various tribes of winged fowl that fly through the air—the myriads of fish that dwell in the water—and the still greater number of animals that in every clime range over immense tracts of land: when we consider all these things, is it

possible to conceive that all these beauties, wonders, and rich display, were formed for a creature whose spirit was less than immortal? Far from us be the thought! Unnoticed by us be the vain reasonings of these self-named philosophers to prove the materiality of the soul; whose perversion of reason is in nothing so striking, as in their apparently wilful endeavours to prove they must perish like the beasts of the field.

If we consider further the situation in which God had placed this distinguished favourite, his immortality is still more apparent. All nature smiled in perfect beauty—a perpetual foliage covered the trees, and ever-verdant herbage covered the earth; while from her endless store, she poured forth in rich variety all her bounteous gifts with an unceasing hand. Mildness breathed around—all was serene—all was temperate—while peace and concord formed one harmonious whole. It is in allusion to this abode of the first father of our race, that the prophet, in the glowing language of inspiration, paints the restoration of the universal concord, in the Messiah's future reign; when every

tranquil delight should prevail, as in the blissful garden of Eden's peaceful groves—when the wolf should dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid; and they should neither hurt nor destroy in the holy mountain of God.

This blissful abode of peace and innocence was lost by the unhappy parent of mankind. Allured by the tempter, he fell; and death, as had been denounced in case of disobedience, was ordained his punishment: to undergo which, it was necessary, his incorruptible nature should become corruptible. The change, like that which will take place at the resurrection, was in the twinkling of an eye, and imperceptible to himself. The first conviction of which change, was, that instead of calmness and tranquillity, the dignity of innocence, and the consciousness that his mind bore the image of his Maker, while obedient to his command: all the passions that now rage in the bosoms of his children, tortured his afflicted soul. Conscience began her delegated office, and produced a sense of shame for having transgressed the law of God, and rendered that presence once his delight; too painful to sustain.

But God must be just as well as good, in order to be a perfect Being. Man's suffering the sentence of death, suffered only the punishment of sin: justice remained unsatisfied. He had been created a free agent, because a good and just being can only truly be served by the voluntary obedience of rational creatures; but he had violated God's attribute of justice—the gifts bestowed on him had been abused; and he had yielded to the enemy of his Maker, whose plan was to defeat the purposes benevolently designed in his creation, and to reduce him by disobedience, to the same irrecoverable misery as himself: therefore God, unchangeable in his decrees, ordains man to undergo the punishment of sin: but thence devises a scheme that shall be reconcileable with what his justice required—shall frustrate the intention of Satan, and shall restore the immortal spirit of man to that felicity he once possessed.

Falling thus under the dominion of death; destined as man had been for immortality, until the time should come that he should undergo that punishment: that immortal spirit breathed into him

at his creation, was left by its own energies to work out for itself, by probationary acts of obedience, that salvation which it would for ever have enjoyed, had not sin rendered the corporeal sufferance of death necessary as a punishment; and which salvation could never have been procured, but, as we shall see, by the sacrifice of a God incarnate.

Pursuing the subject, we now come to see the value of the soul of man in the sight of God.

But who shall call man from the tomb where his sins have laid him? Death holds him in his iron grasp, and Satan insulting smiles at his downfall. Shall any descendant of fallen man—any of the posterity of him who was formed of the dust of the earth, frail, corrupt, liable to accident, to sin and death—the creature of a moment:—shall he become a sacrifice to satisfy the justice of the immortal, invisible, the only wise God? Shall a *mere man* presumptuously dare to offer himself to atone for the guilt of his race? Let him be born the greatest and most elevated of the sons of men—give him all the superior endowments of intellect—with fortitude and virtue to overcome every temp-

tation, and to withstand the vices and follies of the world, and to live without a single fault—give him a wisdom equal to the divine, and a power to work miracles to establish his doctrine—and in every thing let him be what the Saviour of the world really was from his birth—and what is he but a *mere man* still; whose breath may be arrested in a moment, and whose very powers are given him by the God whose justice he is to satisfy? By what means? Why, by a death to which he was before doomed—only in great condescension, this *mere man*, in delivering himself up for the guilt of his fellow-mortals—offers to die the death of a malefactor

Daring, presumptuous mortal! for unless equal with God in dignity, power, and essence—how could he be a sufficient sacrifice? Being created by God, he must be dependant and consequently inferior.

Equal then, must be the being offered in atonement to that Being, whose justice, ruling over rational creatures, demanded a sacrifice, full, perfect, and satisfactory, in order to redeem their

souls from destruction. Even reason suggests the necessity of such a sacrifice; and its propriety must strike conviction on all but the wilfully obstinate. Sorry, in subjects of this kind, are the advocates of revealed religion, to appeal to this faculty of our nature, which is so laible to err, as well as too often subject to the most deplorable imbecility. Indeed at the best, what has reason to offer in competition with revelation? Surely to submit to what God has been pleased to divulge, would better become us. Revelation soars as far above our natural reason, as God is infinitely beyond the nature of mortals. Never can reason by investigation find out the ways of the Omnipotent; nor can man, by the utmost stretch of imagination, conceive adequate ideas commensurate with his wisdom, his justice, and his mercy. If he in his goodness, has laid before our finite understandings, sufficient for our knowledge of his loving-kindness in our redemption: and has made known to us the terms of obedience, we must keep, to obtain the benefits thereof to ourselves; what need we more? To listen with meekness—to obey with fidelity—to adore

his unsearchable majesty; and to wait with patience the accomplishment of his promises, are the duties of the humble christian. Satisfied with the mercy of God, he questions not his wisdom in the necessity or means of his redemption, but in wonder at the condescension of the Almighty, falls prostrate and adores the infinite greatness of redeeming love.

“Without controversy,” says the holy and inspired apostle, “great is the mystery of godliness.” It is beyond all doubt or dispute, “*God was manifest in the flesh.*” The mystery is great indeed, and above the reach of finite comprehension; but as one equal with God could only be deemed a sufficient atonement, and as justice demanded the sacrifice to be made in the nature of the sinners, that so the punishment might fall upon the nature that sinned: then “the only-begotten Son of God—*“begotten of his Father before all worlds—God of God, light of light, very God of very God—*“when he comes into the world, he saith, sacrifice “and offering thou wouldest not, but *a body* hast “thou prepared me—Lo, I come! in the volume of “the book it is written of me to do thy will, O God;

“—I am content to do it—thy law is within my  
“heart.”

This is a truth, my brethren, of which the humble christian entertains no doubt. Though he cannot penetrate beyond the veil, nor enter the Holy of Holies, yet for his encouragement, he has the most ample promises given to his *faith*, in all the *mysteries of Godliness*, “which from the beginning  
“have been hid in God.” But let us have done with controversy; we have already given too much of our precious time to substantiate, against all deistical opposition, truths which are the triumphs of our religion, and the glory of the christian system in particular. “Our faith stands not  
“in the *wisdom of men*, but in *the power of God*.  
“Where *then* is the wise? Where is the disputer  
“of this world? Hath not God made foolish the  
“wisdom of this world?”

—What I have already declared unto you is sufficient to shew the immortality of the soul, and its value in the sight of God; who, to redeem us from the consequence of sin, unfolded such a *mystery of godliness*, as angels themselves desire to look into.

By the merciful interposition of God to overthrow the intention of Satan, in the premeditated design of working the destruction of the soul of man; we hail the mysterious union of the Godhead with human nature: then with the humblest adoration, let us give glory to the Blessed Trinity employed in this divine work: and with praise, gratitude, and triumphant exultation, let us contemplate the declaration of those indubitable proofs of "*God manifest in the flesh,*" the apostle has recorded, viz. "That he was justified in the spirit—  
"seen of angels—preached unto the Gentiles—believed on in the world—received up into glory."

"*Justified in the spirit.*" The spirit bore witness that he was the expected Messiah which had been foretold by the mouths of the prophets. He wrought his miracles—he raised himself from the dead, thus declaring himself to be the Son of God with power, by the spirit: and by sending the Holy Spirit after his ascension down upon the apostles, he not only justified himself, but set the seal of divine authority to his doctrine.

"*Seen of angels.*" They celebrated his birth,

and proclaimed it to the world: they administered to him in the wilderness—succoured him in the garden—they rolled away the stone from the sepulchre in the morning of his resurrection, and with joyful acclamations, open the everlasting doors, and accompany the King of Glory to his throne at the right hand of God.

“*Preached unto the Gentiles.*” The wall of separation being thrown down between the Jews and the Gentiles; Christ commissioned his apostles to preach to the latter; but to our holy apostle St. Paul, this authority was conveyed in a miraculous manner. The Jews were once the sole children and heirs of the first covenant; but we, by the second, are now made fellow-heirs with them, and partakers of the same glory.

“*Believed on in the world.*” Our Saviour, when he appeared in the world, despised its pomp, and chose its humblest state: and though the great, the rich, and the noble believed him not, yet many thousands were added to his Church, from amongst those to whom his doctrine gave the most comfortable assurances of a future life of recompense, as

delivered by the apostles and confirmed by miracles.

“*Received up into glory.*” This was witnessed by a hundred and twenty of his disciples assembled on the Mount of Olivet: he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight—he ascended far above all heavens—far above those starry regions, into the place where he was before his incarnation, as he himself expresses it in *John vi. 62*. This was at once a glorious display of his divinity, and a confirmation of all things he had both said and done. “And while they looked steadfastly “towards heaven as he went up, behold two men “stood by them in white apparel, which also said, “ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into “heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up “from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven.”

Blessed truth! and happy are they who can look with confidence to that important hour! He ascended up, borne by the clouds, to receive again the glory he had before the world was; and he will descend from thence, borne again on the clouds,

when he comes to judgment, and every eye shall see him. Amen! even so come Lord Jesus.

How the Deist will stand at this tribunal, is not for me to say: but will he there assert his unbelief? Will he deny the Judge the worship, the honour, and praise due to his name? If he will not be able to hold the same opinion before the judgment-seat of Christ, he has had the boldness to avow here (and conscience will sooner or later tell him he dare not) it is time for him to disavow his blasphemous sentiments, and to lay hold on the sceptre of mercy held out to him by God; ere he appoints him his portion with the unbelievers.

But for us, my brethren! who have acted on the faith of true believers, happy will be the second coming of our Lord to us: joyful we shall behold him ascending from heaven, with the voice of the archangels and the trump of God. Unappalled we shall view the judgment-seat formed, and the books opened; and shall then recollect his words with joy to ourselves, and compassion to unbelievers:— words, that the hand trembles to indite, and the tongue falters to utter: but to and from whose

awful import, the faithful minister of Christ must neither add nor diminish:—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that *believeth not shall be damned.*"\* "He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already."†

\* St. Mark, xvi. 16. † St. John, iii. 18.

ERRATA.



- Page 10, line 12, omitted *us* after gives.  
23, — 6, omitted *he* before must.  
33, — 3, instead of *a religious man*, read *religious race*.  
209, — 17, no period, but a colon, and a small *d* in the  
word *Did*.  
278, — 17, instead of *ascending*, read *descending*.

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