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S E R M O N S,
ON
IMPORTANT
AND CHIEFLY
PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

BY THE LATE
REV. RICHARD WINTER, B. D.

HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH.—*Heb. xi. 4.*

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REVISED

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AMERICAN HISTORY

BY

CHARLES A. BEAN

AND

EDWARD C. KENNEDY

NEW YORK

1908

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PREFACE.

THE discourses contained in this volume are selected from a great number, which the venerable Author left in short-hand. It has been our mutual desire to fix on those sermons, which appeared more particularly calculated to give the many serious persons, who valued his ministry, a true specimen of his usual manner of preaching. And readers in general, who were unacquainted with the Author, will here find another proof, that the Protestant-Dissenters have had, and have honoured able ministers of the New Testament, who understood “rightly to divide the word” of truth.

It may be proper to mention, that four of these discourses, viz. the fifth, the tenth, the eleventh, and the twelfth, were many years ago written in long-hand by the Author, and
were

were probably intended by him for publication. The remainder we have carefully, and to the utmost of our power, accurately transcribed from his short-hand manuscripts.

We are sensible, that these discourses come before the public with some of the usual disadvantages of posthumous publications. Some of the sermons, though full of excellent and evangelical instruction, want the Author's finishing hand. And in some, the conclusion is certainly more abrupt than could be wished. Probably it was the custom of the deceased, as it has been and is of many ministers of different denominations; to leave himself at liberty, to use a more free and extensive address in his applications. This will sufficiently account for the apparent deficiency. And yet it is not unlikely, that these parts of his sermons were to his auditory in general the most impressive.

One of us introduces the volume, with the discourse, which he delivered to his own congregation the Lord's day succeeding the funeral

neral

neral of the worthy Author. In the publication of this discourse at the request of many who heard it, of others, who have expressed a desire to read it, and especially of his highly esteemed friend, the only surviving branch of the family of the deceased, he wishes to be considered, as paying a willing tribute of respect to the memory of his honoured relative, pastor, and friend.

The other has closed the whole with that excellent charge, which the venerable Author addressed to him at his ordination. He lays it before the public, because it was the only charge which the Author ever delivered; because it is far from being a common-place performance; because the desire of those who heard it has always been to see it in print; and that it may stand as a memorial, that he desires to have it written on the table of his heart, and exemplified in his conduct.

We commit these gleanings from the richly productive field of our departed relative's labours, to the blessing of the great Lord of the

the

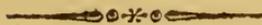
the harvest, without whom, we wish always to be sensible, that "Paul would plant, and "Apolles water" in vain.

JOHN WINTER, Newbury.

ROBERT WINTER, Colebrook-row, Islington.

December 31st, 1799.

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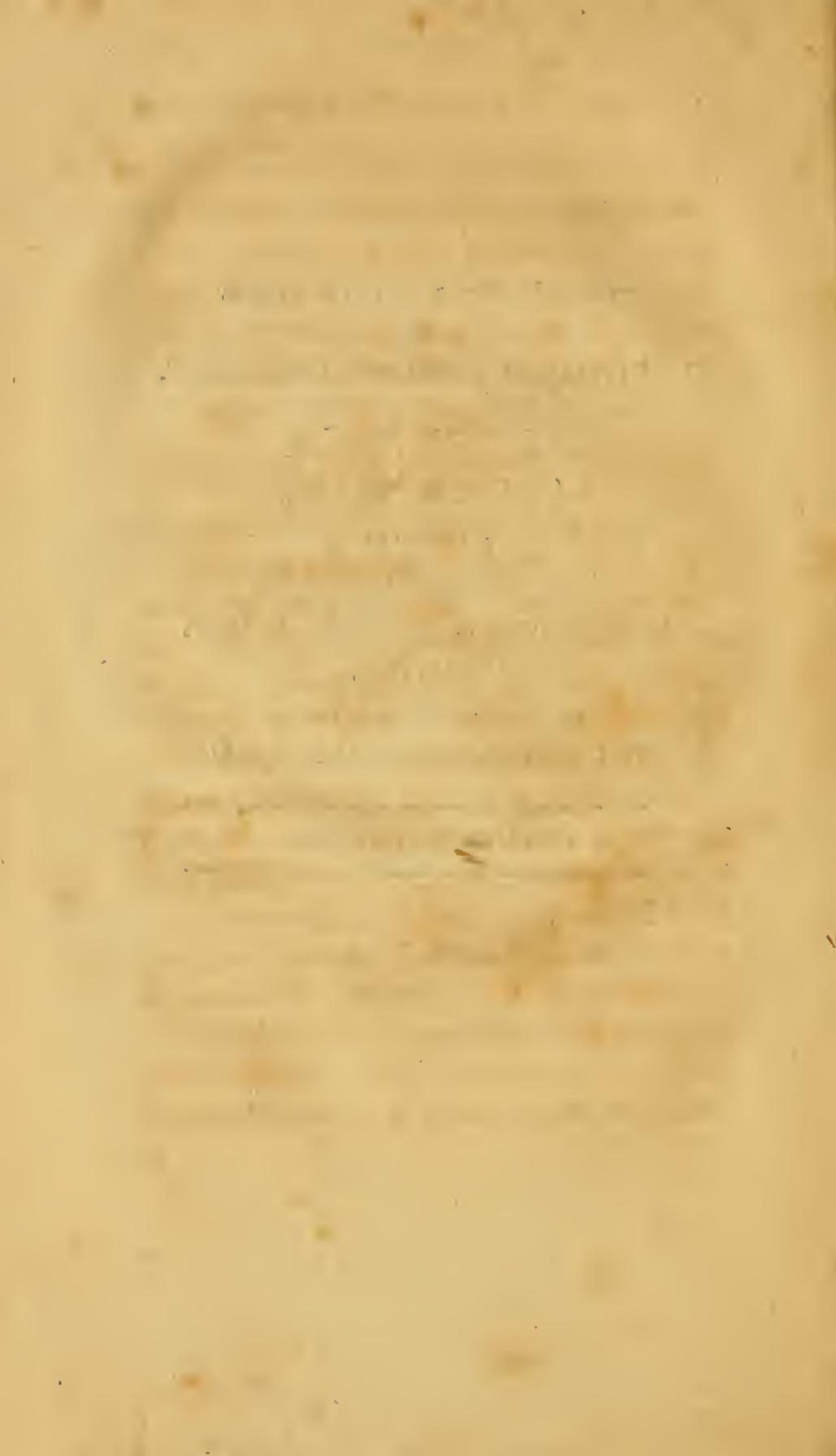
THE CHARACTER AND BLESSEDNESS
OF THE
HABITUALLY PREPARED SERVANT.



A SERMON,
PREACHED AT
THE MEETING-HOUSE,
HANOVER-STREET, LONG-ACRE, LONDON,
April 7, 1799,

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF
THE REV. RICHARD WINTER, B.D.

By ROBERT WINTER.



THE CHARACTER AND BLESSEDNESS
OF THE
HABITUALLY PREPARED SERVANT.

—••••—
A SERMON.

LUKE xii. 43.

*Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he
cometh shall find so doing.*

THESE words are beautifully descriptive of the state, in which the watchful christian is found by his Lord at the close of life, and of the blessedness or happiness which belongs to his character.

Jesus Christ had urged on his disciples the necessity of a constant preparation for death. If the servants in a great house expect their master to return from a long and important journey, they watch for him by day and by night: and blessed or happy are they, if when he comes he finds them watching. It is to their honour to be found at their post. If there is danger of a house being beset with thieves, it

4 *The Character and Blessedness of*

is wise and prudent to be always prepared for the attack ; that let it come when it will, there may be a timely opposition. Hence arose the important practical admonition ; “ Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of “ man,” your divine Master and Lord “ com- “ eth at an hour when ye think not.”

At the close of this awakening discourse, Peter said unto Jesus, “ Lord, speakest thou “ this parable unto us, or even to all ?” Are these parabolical representations designed chiefly for our benefit, or for the benefit of all thy disciples, or all who attend thine instructions ? “ And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful “ and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make “ ruler over his household, to give them their “ portion of meat in due season ?” Never was so just and impressive a portrait of a christian minister drawn. It strongly implies, that if the blessedness of the active watchful christian is great, the blessedness of the active watchful minister is still greater. For then it is immediately added, “ Blessed is that servant, whom “ his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so do- “ ing ;”

“ing;” as the duty of his place, and the nature of his employment required.

Various events are represented in the language of the New Testament, by the general expression of the coming of our Lord. There can be no doubt, that in the text, and the passage with which it is connected, it means either death or judgment. The former appears to me far the most probable, because the faithful servant is represented as watching, and doing his duty until his Lord comes. And there is a great propriety in considering the close of a good man's life as the coming of his Lord; for “he has the keys of the invisible world, and of death.”

Suffer me in a very cursory manner to present to you a few plain remarks,

FIRST, On the habitually active character of the approved servant of Christ,

SECONDLY, On the close of his life, considered as the coming of his Lord; and

THIRDLY, On the blessedness of that servant, who is prepared for his departure.

Thus the way will be opened for a tribute of respect to the memory of an aged and faithful minister, whom most of us knew, and whom many of us loved and revered, who has lately been called to his account, and to his crown.

FIRST. We are to turn our thoughts to the habitually active character of the approved servant of Christ.

In opposition to the indolent, he is doing. In distinction from the uninformed and ill-directed, he is so doing as his Lord had ordered. And it is plainly implied, that his exertions continue even to the last.

1. The genuine and consistent christian is not an indolent, but an active man.

The state into which he is brought by the faith of the gospel, is a state of activity. In the great business of personal religion, in the duties which he owes to God and to his fellow
low

low creatures, as well as to himself, he has much to do. And his language is that of his divine Master, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work." The precepts, the patterns, the motives of revealed religion, contained in the scriptures, shew plainly, that a life of religion is an active life. There is much to be done. Nor is there a discovery of the gospel, which does not enforce the practice of duty, and animate to the performance of it.

If this be the case with christians in general, who can doubt that it is incumbent on christian ministers to be "doing?" In their enquiries into truth, in their improvements in knowledge, in their preparations for public instruction, in the various parts of their ministerial duty, there is much to be done. And a minister, who is not a vigilant, industrious man, discovers a great deficiency, either in the views, which influenced him to undertake his office, or in the governing temper of his own heart. If every servant in the house has his employment, surely the steward of the

household must not be inactive. "To watch
 "for souls" is no sinecure place, but a laborious and self-denying business, which calls for continual exertions of wisdom and prudence, of benevolence and zeal. Dr. Doddridge has a beautiful verse in one of his hymns, on the duty of a christian minister :

" 'Tis not a work of small import,
 " The pastor's care demands ;
 " But what might fill an angel's heart,
 " And fill'd a Saviour's hands."

2. The approved servant is described not only as doing, but "so doing" as his Lord has appointed.

There is a great deal of busy trifling in the world, and I fear, not a little of it among the professors of the gospel. The christian who enters into the spirit of his religion, is not merely an active servant, but he is desirous of doing that which is most agreeable to his Lord, and most conformable to his station and engagements. The enquiry of the converted Saul of Tarsus is familiar to his mind, "Lord, " what wilt thou have me to do ?" How is
 it

it the will of my divine Master that I should be employed? How may I best manifest love to his person, obedience to his commands, and attachment to his cause? By what means may I attain the greatest improvements in religion, and be the instrument of spreading its favour all around me? Enquiries of this nature will direct the conduct and form the character of the consistent disciple of Jesus. Let me be so doing, as will be pleasing and honourable to my great Redeemer, and I value not the smiles of the world, which I may probably lose, or its frowns, which I may be likely to gain.

Such too is the character of the faithful and wise steward of the household. He bows to the orders of his Lord, and is concerned, in every part of his ministry, to act under his direction, with his approbation, and with a view to his glory. An ill-directed zeal may lead christians and ministers into pernicious mistakes. But an active mind, regulated by the will of the great Head of the church, is one of the most important blessings which a christian or a minister can enjoy.

3. It is implied, in the language of the text, that the exertions of the faithful servant continue to the last. When the Lord comes, he is "found so doing."

Religion is not a business to be taken up and laid down at pleasure. "To remember our Creator" is the proper employment of youth; and "in the ways of righteousness the hoary head should be found." Through all the vicissitudes of life, amidst the temptations to which the heart is exposed, the real christian endures to the end, looks not back, fights the good fight of faith, lays hold on eternal life. As long as he lives, he presses on towards the crown. This idea of perseverance is applicable, not only to religion in general, but to the various expressions of it. We are forbidden "to be weary in" any species of "well-doing."

And surely the minister of Christ is not the only description of his servants, allowed to relax from his exertions. If indeed disease, infirmity, or some remarkable indications of the direction of Providence oblige him to desert his work, it is well. He will then bow to
that

that as his affliction, which would by no means have been his choice. "He has done what he could;" and "his Lord is not an austere master, who expects to reap where he has not sown." But it is pleasing and honourable, to observe a faithful minister continuing to the last at his post of duty. And if the great Arbiter of life and death so order it, there is something peculiarly encouraging in the thought, that "his Lord at his coming found him so doing," that his work continued till his day was just closing, and that the interval was short, between the employment of the ministry on earth, and the crown of glory in heaven.

Let it however be remembered, that if a christian or a minister be taken from the more active duties of life, he has often an opportunity of glorifying God, growing in grace, and edifying the souls of others, by his patient and humble deportment in the chamber of confinement, or on the bed of pain. Nor does religion ever receive a more potent recommendation, than when those who have lived
under

under its power, and spent their days in endeavouring to diffuse its triumphs, are enabled to exhibit its energies in the near views of the final account.

Such is the character of the genuine servant and the approved steward; active—governed by his Lord's will,—persevering to the end.

Let us now turn our attention,

SECONDLY, To the view which the text gives us of the close of the good servant's life. It is “the coming of his Lord,”

No view of death can be more delightful than this to the true christian; whether he considers him who has the keys of death in his hands, as the master, whom he has endeavoured to serve, as the friend, to whom he owes infinite obligations, or as the judge, from whose sentence he expects his final doom.

1. It is the coming of the master, whom he has endeavoured to serve.

“Eye-

“Eye-servants,” as the apostle Paul styles those servants, who have no love to their master, but are only afraid of the effects of his displeasure, may tremble, and be alarmed at his unexpected appearance. There are many, it is to be feared, under a profession of christianity, who have very little, if any habitual concern, to please Christ now, or to be accepted of him hereafter. To these, a dying hour, considered as the time of his coming, must be a dreaded period of their existence. And it is no great wonder, that such worldly-minded professors should be averse to every thing, that reminds them of their approach to death and the invisible world. But the genuine christian, who “loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,” and who, amidst ten thousand lamented imperfections and sins, has endeavoured faithfully to serve him, may well anticipate his coming with pleasure; and death, viewed as the signal of his approach, has no horrors. “I have endeavoured,” he says, “to occupy with the talent entrusted to my care, in the view of the coming of my Lord. And while with humility I own my unworthiness and unprofitableness, I trust, he will not
“ find,

“ find, that I have been wholly unfaithful.”
 The coming of Christ to such a servant is the encouragement, and the reward of his fidelity.

2. Death is the coming of the benefactor, to whom the christian owes infinite obligations.

“ The love of Christ,” is said in the language of the New Testament, “ to pass knowledge.” And the christian, who derives his ideas of religion from the New Testament, will entertain the highest apprehensions of it. For Christ himself, he owes the most exalted thanks to God the Father, as “ his unspeakable gift.” And the friendship of Christ, exhibited in his incarnation, his instructions, his sufferings and death, his resurrection and ascension, and the continual regard, which on the throne of his glory he manifests to his disciples, he values as the channel through which his highest blessings; and his dearest hopes descend. “ And will this “ blessed friend, who is now absent with a “ view to promote my eternal happiness, will he “ come again; and will the closing hour of my “ life be the season of his appearance?” How
 pleasing

pleasing the idea to the grateful mind of the christian! Well may the genuine disciples of Jesus Christ be described as those, who “love “the appearance” of their Saviour. When the appointed days of life are concluded, be they few or many, the Redeemer will come; and into his presence, his servant, dismissed from this world of sin and sorrow, shall be graciously introduced. “To be with Christ, is” indeed, “far better” than to be here.

3. Death is the coming of the judge, from whose wise, and holy, and merciful sentence, the christian expects his final doom.

Between the moment of death, and the great day of the Lord, when the dead shall be raised, years and ages may intervene. But not only are the character and the state irrevocably fixed, when the last breath is drawn; the immortal spirit, we have the fullest scriptural reason to believe, immediately enters on the state prepared for it. The spirits of the wicked go into “prison.” “The spirits of the just are “made perfect.” “Absent from the body,
“ they

“ they are present with the Lord.” The hour of death is that period of human existence, when he, to whom all judgment is committed, shall assign to every individual of the race of Adam, his final portion. It is the happy and glorious hour, when the faithful servant of Jesus shall receive from the hands of his Redeemer a crown of life. On the decisions of that day rest the happiness or the misery of an eternity. That the determination will be made by one “ who ” experimentally “ knows “ what is in man ; ” “ who ” also by a knowledge truly divine, “ searches the reins and the “ heart,” and whose judgment must be according to truth, fills the mind of the serious christian with united solemnity and pleasure. Is death the coming of a heart-searching judge? O let me watch and pray, lest it should be recorded of me, he is “ weighed in the balance, “ and is found wanting.” Is it the coming of him, who has promised to bestow endless felicity on all who love him? “ Let me be diligent, that I may be found of him in peace, “ without spot, and blameless.” It is time to take a brief view,

THIRDLY,

THIRDLY, Of the blessedness of the prepared servant. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing."

1. He is blessed in anticipation, when he looks forward to death from the scenes of the present life.

To a good man, a real believer in Jesus, death has lost its sting. He is a conquered enemy. The divine Redeemer has vanquished him in his own territories, and for the benefit of all his faithful people, has transformed him into an angel of light and mercy. The man of sincere and habitual piety, who "gives all diligence to make his calling and election sure," who "labours, that whether present in the body, or absent from it, he may be accepted of Christ," is authorized by his principles, to look forward to death with calmness and pleasure. And is it not infinitely blessed for a feeble creature, who must one day yield to death, and who knows not any morning that he rises from his bed, that he shall live to the evening, to be able to think of this inevitable event with calm composure, with devout and glowing hope? How much

more rational and sublime are these views of death, than those of the “men of the world, “who have their portion in this life!”

2. He is also blessed, when a dying hour approaches.

Let it come when it will, it finds him ready. Sudden death may surprize him in the midst of his worldly avocations. But these properly regulated, are as much the places of duty, as the house of prayer, or the closet of retirement. There are not many hours in the day, perhaps I might say, not one, in which God is absent from the thoughts of a truly good man. And thus is he habitually ready for his great change, though he is not always thinking of it. Sudden death is to the friend of Jesus sudden glory. But the blessedness of a dying hour, which I have chiefly in view, is that which attends its gradual approach to a true christian. During the days, or weeks, or months of a lingering illness, while reason has been in exercise, and the fullest apprehensions of the approaching change have been entertained, many christians have been favoured with a serenity, a hope, and a joy, which have
turned

turned the shadow of death into the morning, and made them the subjects rather of congratulation than of condolence. While they have disclaimed all dependence on themselves, they have derived from the discoveries of the gospel, and particularly from the mediation and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, the most exalted satisfaction. Having fled to that refuge, they have found themselves secure. At the same time, it has been a source of great pleasure, to look back on the course which they have run; and they have adored that grace, which has made them to differ from others, and has led them into the way of holiness, and the path to heaven. And if they have not only been able to hold out to the end, but have also been the honoured instruments of promoting in the minds of others the same great and good work, which has been begun and carried on in themselves, what blessed recollections, what glorious hopes must illuminate the departing hour. What joy must arise from the prospect of that great day, when they shall meet before the throne of God and the Lamb, those whom they loved on earth, and whom they had been the means of leading to heaven. Once more—

3. The approved christian is blessed, unspeakably blessed, in the rewards of grace and glory in a better world.

His Saviour receives him into his presence with unutterable joy, pronounces him "called, and chosen, and faithful," arrays him in the white garments of righteousness and praise, places on his head a crown of glory, and leads him to some bright and happy mansion of purity and bliss in the house of his Father. And at the last great day, he shall be proclaimed before an assembled universe, as one who dared to serve Christ in the midst of a wicked generation, who never swerved from his cause, but continued "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." This is the man, will the exalted Redeemer say to the listening multitude of the blessed, This is the man, who was not ashamed of me or of my doctrine, who lived under the power, and died with the hopes of my gospel. See, what honours await him. "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord." Nor can we doubt, that the good and faithful minister, whose labour and aim it

has

has been “to turn many to righteousness, will
“then shine” with superior lustre, “as one of
“the brightest stars in the firmament, for ever
“ever.”

While I have been thus leading you through
this obvious train of serious, and, I trust, bene-
ficial reflections, I am persuaded, that you have
been ready to apply them to the decease of my
venerable relative, lately removed from the
sphere of labour, enjoyment, and usefulness,
which he honourably filled in the church on
earth, to the blessed abodes of immortality,
where TO BE WITH CHRIST, the subject
which he chose for his funeral discourse, he
now knows to be the highest source of felicity.

If, on such an occasion, I may be allowed to
speak of myself, I feel his loss in some views
as the loss of a father. Under his ministry I
was accustomed to sit from my childhood to
the time of my own entrance on the sacred em-
ployment. In the church of which he was a
pastor, it was my happiness to enter on a pro-
fession of religion at the Lord's table. There
my first vows were made. There my earliest

religious connections were formed. And there, through the blessing of God, I reaped advantages which, I trust, I shall never be suffered wholly to forget. To his public instructions I owe much; to his private conversations, his faithful admonitions, his animating encouragements, I owe more. He has been invariably my friend. And I think with peculiar pleasure of the attachment, which he has repeatedly discovered to me, in my connection with this society, and particularly in stepping out of his usual retirement, to join us in our annual, social, and friendly meetings. The innocent cheerfulness which he discovered on the last of these occasions, and his acceptable and successful endeavours to turn the conversation into an useful as well as a pleasing channel, by some very interesting and instructive anecdotes, will, I am sure, be long remembered by many of my hearers.

The life of this excellent "old disciple," the Rev. RICHARD WINTER, was not marked by many changes. He was blessed with the unspeakable privilege of an eminently godly mother, by whom, from a child, he was
led

led to a knowledge of the holy scriptures. Early, I apprehend very early, he chose the Lord for his God, and discovered the signs of eminent piety. Like Obadiah, "he feared the Lord from his youth." And like Obadiah, it was the prevailing character of his life, that "he feared the Lord greatly." He was designed by his friends for a secular employment; but his mind was so much bent on the acquisition of knowledge, and his heart so fixed on the great realities of the gospel, that it was soon evident, that the shop and the counting-house were not scenes, in which he would be either happy or eminent. By his own request he was sent to the learned Dr. Abraham Taylor, at Deptford, by whom he was led through a course of grammatical and classical studies, preparatory to his entrance as a student for the ministry, under the celebrated Mr. Eames. In the academy, over which that distinguished man presided, he received the rudiments of that knowledge, which, like the priests of old, he kept for the benefit of others. He commenced preaching, if I mistake not, at the early age of nineteen, but richly fraught with a variety of learning,

learning, and especially that which is connected with the elucidation of the scriptures.

One year, in this early period of his ministry, he spent at Bradford, in Wiltshire. He was also a short time at Stepney. At the age of twenty-four, in the year 1744, he was chosen morning-preacher to the congregation assembling on the Pavement, Moorfields, of which the Rev. Mr. Hall was at that time the venerable pastor. In this capacity he continued more than fourteen years, during a considerable part of which time he also preached in the afternoon at Islington.

At the expiration of this term, in 1759, the Rev. Thomas Bradbury, (a name which I mention with the veneration due to the memory of so celebrated an ancestor) being far advanced in life and infirmities, needed a co-pastor. My good uncle was proposed. The proposal was universally acceptable. Without a dissenting voice he was chosen, and in a short time ordained. In about three months after this, his aged and respected colleague was
gathered

gathered to his fathers, declaring with his dying breath, that of all the publications which he had sent into the world, and he had entered deeply into the political and theological controversies of the day, he looked back to none with so much pleasure, as to five excellent practical sermons, which he preached and published more than half a century before, on "The Christian's Joy in Finishing his Course." Of so little importance does every thing appear in a dying hour, but that which is most intimately connected with serious godliness and immortality,

In the pastoral charge of the society in New Court, our honoured friend lately deceased, was continued by a kind Providence to the close of his days; a period of almost forty years.

Few ministers, during so long a course of time, have been less interrupted in the prosecution of their work by illness, and none have more constantly fulfilled the duties of their office. Though his constitution was never robust, yet he was very seldom laid wholly aside.

In

In the early part of his ministry he was thought consumptive. But change of air, temporary relaxation, and an easy journey of some months, were the means of preserving his valuable life for a long series of labour and usefulness. From that time he was seldom absent a sabbath from the pulpit. Since my knowledge of him, I recollect no instance of long confinement, but that which was occasioned by the calamity of a broken bone, in the severe weather which introduced the year 1795. From that affliction he experienced a surprising recovery, and was enabled to return to his work with nearly as much vigour and constancy as ever.

His talents for public instruction were very considerable. He had not indeed the graces of a popular elocution. But there was in his manner a propriety, a decorum, an earnestness, which very much engaged the attention of his hearers. His discourses were clear, perspicuous, and sometimes argumentative. He never concealed from his auditory his religious sentiments. He judged, and he rightly judged, that such a concealment would have betrayed an unmanly cowardice, unworthy the character
of

of a good minister of Jesus Christ. But still his free and open declaration of his views of divine truth was manifestly directed to the great ends of the christian ministry, the conversion of sinners, the edification of believers, the honour of his divine Master. There was a great variety in his discourses. He was deeply versed in scriptural learning ; and he largely investigated, and almost exhausted, every subject which engaged his meditations. But the great excellence of his preaching was, that it was remarkably spiritual and experimental. His appeals to the consciences of his hearers were very striking and impressive. His acquaintance with the human heart shewed itself in every sermon. He was indeed “ a faithful and “ wise steward ” in his Master’s household. Nor should I forget to add, that his prayers were uncommonly copious and devotional, calculated to fix the attention of the wandering, and very greatly to impress the hearts of the serious. He continued an acceptable and useful minister even to the last. Few preachers, without pretensions to popular talents, have kept up so respectable an auditory as his, to so late an evening of life.

It

It was, however, a powerful recommendation of his public exercises, that as a christian he adorned the doctrine which, as a minister, he preached. Serious religion was the governing principle of his mind. He connected every thing with it. He considered every thing else as subordinate to it. It was impossible to be in his company without perceiving, that "he was a faithful man, and feared God above many." The strictest regard to truth was visible in his whole deportment. He had a firmness and decidedness of character, which commanded general respect. The arts of flattery and dissimulation, which obtain too much credit in the world, and even among religious professors, were his abhorrence. Nor did he value his secular interest, or any consideration connected with the present life, when they interfered with what he considered to be his duty. His mind remained active and studious to the last. He was continually enquiring, and continually gaining a large variety of useful knowledge. And he had a very happy art of communicating what he knew. Few old people can make themselves more agreeable or instructive to the young, than he frequently was.

was. The scriptures, however, were his chosen companions. He daily read a portion of the inspired volume in the original languages. And it is remarkable, that from a pure concern to understand the scriptures, he continued his attention to the Hebrew of the Old Testament, as well as to the Greek of the New, to the close of his life. But though he was fond of critical learning, he was much more fond of devotional views. To these he made the former constantly subservient.

The strength of religious principles in his mind was most of all visible in seasons of affliction. While he was confined to his bed for many weeks by the calamity before mentioned, he uttered not a murmuring word, but with a truly christian resignation, yielded himself to the will of his heavenly Father, frequently saying, that he was where the Lord had placed him, and in a more suitable or desirable place he could not be. His domestic trials also had been very great. Divine Providence deprived him more than twenty years ago, in 1778, of the beloved companion and wife of his youth, the daughter of the well-known

known and pious Mr. Joseph Williams, of Kidderminster. Since that event, he has been called to mourn over the remains of a daughter, and an only son, both grown up to maturity, and of a hopeful and promising granddaughter in the early morning of life. Of him it might be said, as it was of Job, "In all this " he sinned not, nor charged God foolishly;" but entered into the acknowledgment of the afflicted patriarch, "The Lord gave, and the " Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name " of the Lord." He bore with meek submission the rod of his chastening Parent; and by his public instructions on each of these occasions, and his pious demeanour under these heart-rending wounds, he taught his flock, how a christian should bear the rod of the Almighty. He "neither despised the chastening of the Lord, nor fainted, when he was " rebuked of him." And it was his unspeakable consolation, that he had the most exalted reason to conclude, respecting the departed members of his house, that his loss was their eternal gain. They all testified in life and in death, that the God of their ancestors was their God.

He

He knew also how to value the blessings which yet remained, and was solaced under his repeated bereavements, by the pious and affectionate attentions of an amiable surviving daughter, who has always discovered, that the interests of her venerable father were peculiarly near to her heart. Nor is it an unimportant instance of the pious resignation of our truly excellent friend, and of the power, which considerations of duty had over all other considerations in his breast, that he was willing to be left alone, at a distance from his family, and amidst the increasing infirmities of advanced life, when Providence opened a door of usefulness for his son-in-law, the Rev. Frederick Hamilton, in another part of the church. The principles of the christian in this instance remarkably triumphed over the feelings of the parent. And if the welfare of his family, if the usefulness of a minister, if the salvation of immortal souls, if the honour of the divine Redeemer were to be promoted, he felt it his duty to rejoice; yes, and he did rejoice. Indeed the temper of his mind was brought under the constant influence of the gospel of Christ. In affliction and in prosperity, in sickness

ness and in health, he was habitually watchful. And at whatsoever hour the Lord had come, he would have found him "so doing."

It had often been his desire, with submission to the divine will, that he might not be long laid aside from his work. His desire was graciously heard and accepted. Between the day, when he was first taken with the disorder of which he died, and the closing hour, but one sabbath intervened. Only twelve days before his death, he was in his pulpit. And the service, which closed his public labours, though neither he nor his hearers imagined that it would be the last, was, in the judgment of all his friends, uncommonly animated and impressive. On the following day he was seized with a complaint, which was from the first attended with threatening symptoms, and ended in his dissolution. It was his mercy, and an unspeakable blessing to his friends, that during the short period of his illness, he had even to the last, the most perfect possession of his faculties. And though the nature of his complaint, an oppressive shortness of breath, prevented his saying all that he felt, yet it was
impossible

impossible to visit him, without perceiving the genuine influence of the gospel.

Had an infidel witnessed this closing scene, he must, methinks, have been charmed with the beauty and power of revealed religion. Had a votary of the world been there, he would have been struck with the excellence of real habitual piety. I will add; had his dying sentiments and dying hopes been beheld by any, who arrogate to themselves the names of philosophical and rational believers; they would have seen it possible for a person, who had thoroughly entered into those views of religion, which they style gloomy and narrow, to be most truly happy in his last moments. It would have been seen, that a well-informed, judicious friend of the doctrines usually called Calvinistic, died with the most rational and the most amiable views of God as a Father and a Friend, with great enlargedness of soul to those who conscientiously differed from him, and with the most cheerful hopes of immortality.

From his first seizure he considered his disorder as mortal, and said, that he had taken leave of his public work. The frame of his mind during the time of his illness was not rapturous or enthusiastic. It was humble, it was serene, it was happy. He had the deepest consciousness of his own failings, and owned himself a sinful creature. His hopes rested on that great foundation, to which for nearly sixty years, he had in the course of his ministry directed the attention of his fellow creatures, "Jesus Christ and him crucified." The atoning sacrifice of the divine Redeemer he considered as the only ground of his confidence. This he viewed, and in the nearest approach of death, felt the comfort of viewing it, as the noblest demonstration of the wisdom, the power, and the love of God.

I cannot forbear mentioning a few very pleasing illustrations of his habitual temper of mind in these interesting circumstances. In one of my daily visits to him, he said, "I have been thinking, how any one may know, whether his name is written in the Lamb's
" book

“book of life. While I was pondering on
“the subject, that passage occurred to my
“mind, where our blessed Redeemer says, “I
“will write upon him my new name.” Where
“that name is written on the heart, where
“there is a prevailing love to Christ in his
“person, in his character, in his word, in his
“cause, in his people, that person has a fair
“right to consider, that his name is written
“among the number of the Saviour’s friends.
“They who love Christ are loved by him.”
And then he added, with great solemnity and
expression of countenance, “I do hope that I
“love Christ.” At another time I heard him
break out in these delightful lines of Dr.
Watts, in the beginning of the 146th psalm :

“I’ll praise my Maker with my breath,
“And when my voice is lost in death :”

(“And that,” said he, “it soon will be ;”)

“Praise shall employ my nobler pow’rs.”

Towards the close of his illness, he complained much of restlessness, and was very desirous of dissolution. “I thought,” said he to me one day, “that it was impossible to be

“weaker, and yet alive. But I am weaker, and
 “yet alive.” And to a friend he made this apology for a degree of impatience, which he was afraid he had discovered. “If you were sure,
 “quite sure, in three or four days at most, of
 “being put into possession of a fair and ample
 “inheritance; should you not be anxious and
 “uneasy till the time came?”

I mention these instances, to shew where his heart was, and how his thoughts were employed. At the same time, I consider it as a very striking evidence of the calmness and composure of his mind, that at intervals, he could converse with his friends on secular concerns, and adjust, with his usual accuracy, his own private affairs.

The last interview I had with him was on Thursday the 28th of March, the day before he died. Mr. Hamilton was in the room also. His disorder was then so troublesome to himself, that he could not speak without the greatest difficulty. But even at that time, so collected, and so benevolent was his mind, he thought not of himself only, but of his friends.

He

He looked forward to the approaching day of Mr. Hamilton's ordination at Brighton, and expressed his earnest prayers, that God would be with ministers and people on that solemn season, and that he would succeed his labours there to much permanent good. Excellent man ! Like the aged Simeon, he thought with pleasure of the work of the Lord going on and prospering, though his eyes should not behold it.

He had long "died daily" in the temper of his mind. Death to him was neither a new, nor an alarming subject of contemplation. Its sting was indeed taken away. His dismissal was exactly what his friends could wish. Through the progress of his disorder, he had never been confined to his bed, but sat up every day in a room near his chamber. The last night of his life he had remained there later than usual, gradually growing weaker and weaker, panting for breath, but "panting much more," as he frequently expressed himself, "for the living God." At length, with surprising vigour, he walked into his

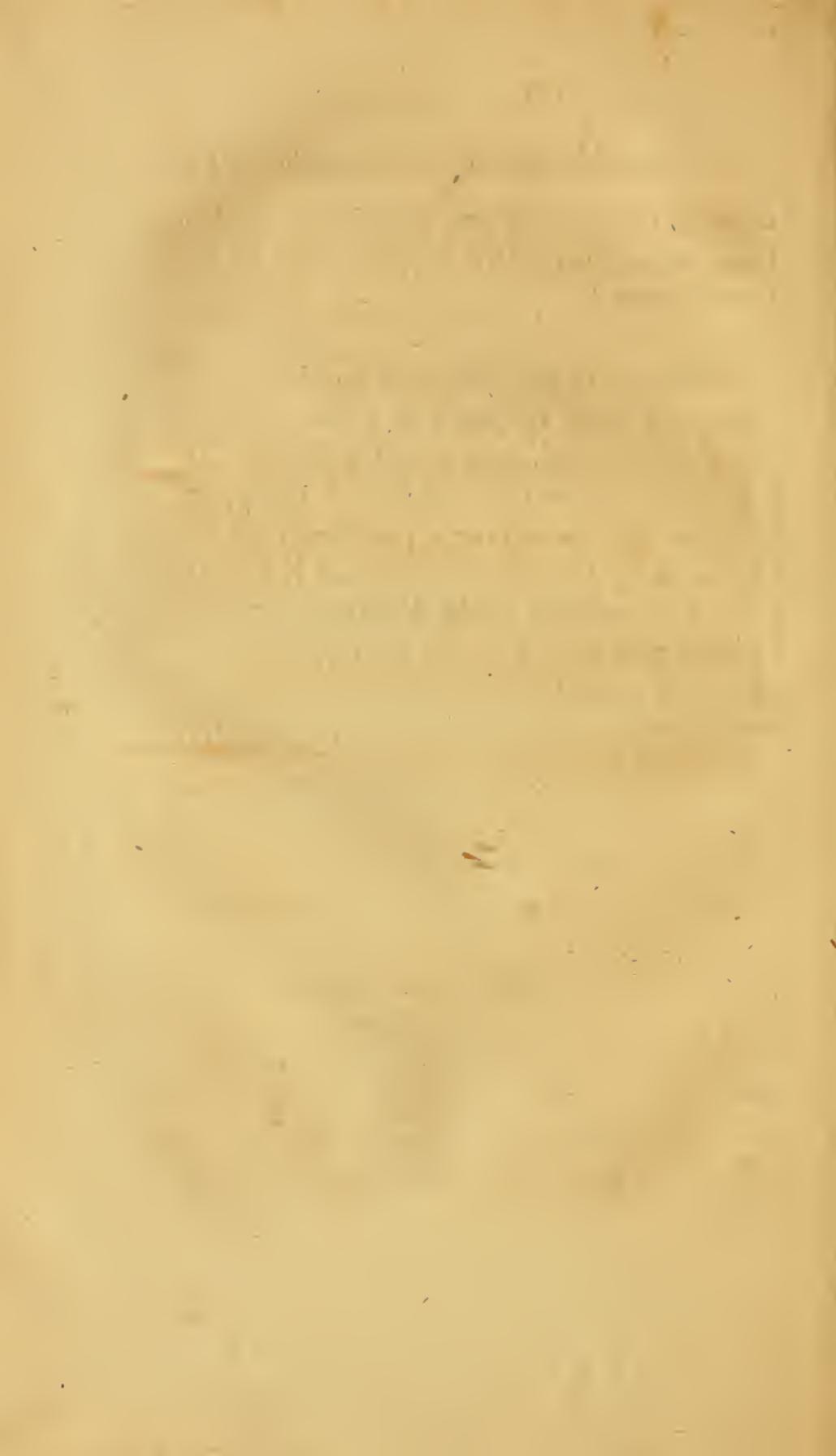
chamber, and said, (these were his last words) "I will lie down once more on my bed, and then give up the ghost." His breath was shorter and shorter, till at half past two o'clock in the morning of Friday, March 29th, being far advanced in the 79th year of his age, without a sigh or a groan, he entered into his Master's joy.

I dare not trespass more on your time. I have already detained you too long. May christian ministers, who knew the deceased, and particularly may he, who now addresses you, never forget so bright an example. O that I could catch the mantle of the ascended prophet! O that in my private life, and public ministry, I may be enabled to discover some portion of that spirit, which animated him!

Let the close of a faithful minister's life be diligently improved by us all. Let us be thankful, that the gospel remains; that though christian instructors die, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Let us bear on our hearts the circumstances of the
destitute

deserted church, and pray that it may in due time be supplied with a "pastor after God's own heart."

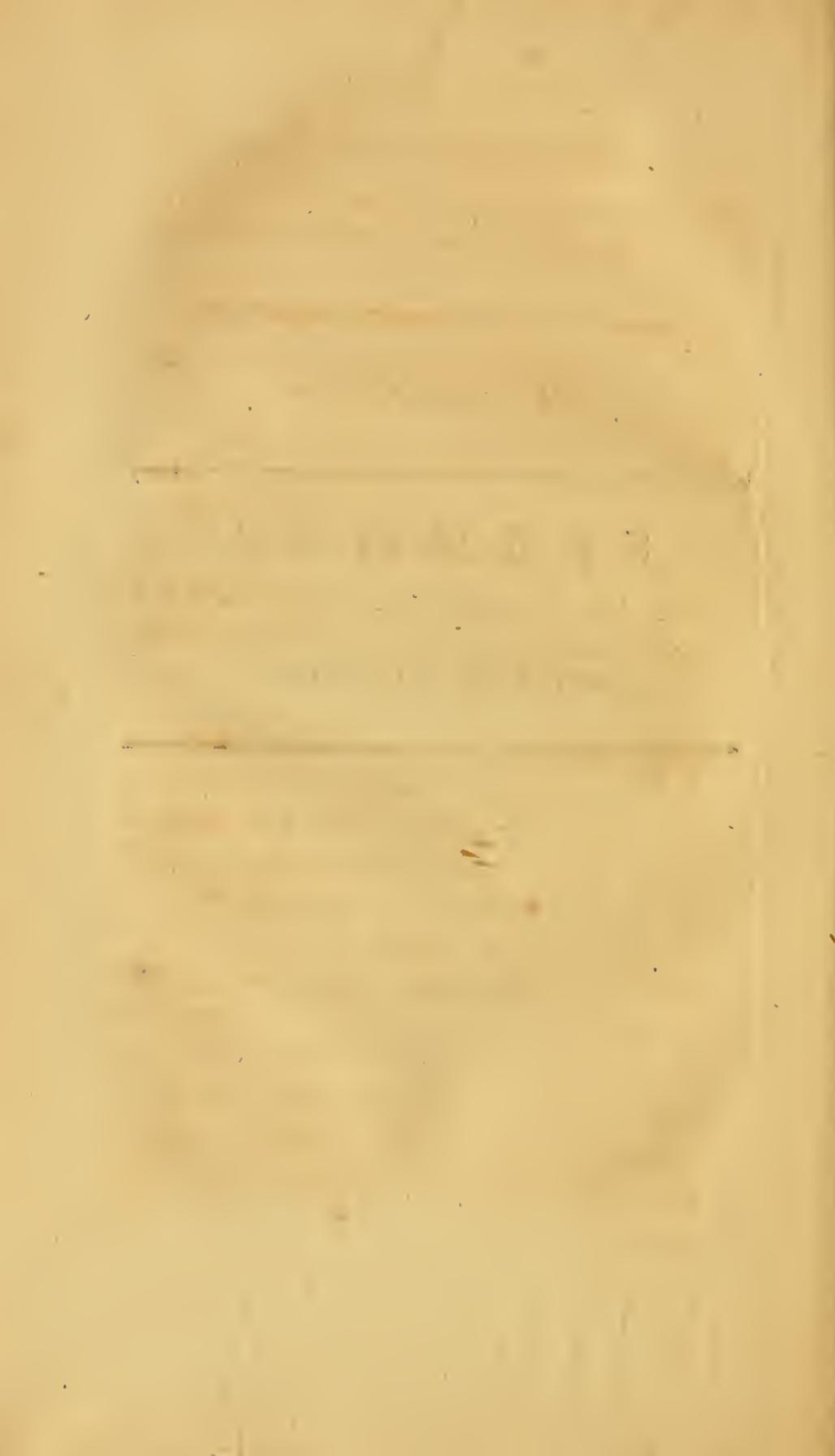
Finally, let us all learn most highly to estimate, and most diligently to pursue serious, habitual, practical, evangelical godliness. It bears on its bosom the character of the truest wisdom. For whatever reproaches may be cast on it by those who understand it not, it entitles its possessor to the blessings of Christ himself, pronounced in the words, which we have now considered: "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." Amen.



S E R M O N S,

BY THE LATE

REV. RICHARD WINTER.



THE DUTY OF THANKSGIVING.

SERMON I.

PSALM C. 4.

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

WHATEVER was the occasion on which this psalm was composed, we have ground to believe, that the spirit of Christ in the penman and prophet enabled him to foresee the gospel dispensation; for, in the first verse, "all lands," all the inhabitants of the earth are called upon to "make a joyful noise unto the Lord." It agrees to the first verse of the 117th psalm, "O praise the Lord all ye nations, praise him all ye people," which the apostle quotes, and applies to the conversion of the gentiles, "Praise the
" the

“ the Lord all ye gentiles, and laud him all ye
‘ people.”

For a long course of ages, the knowledge and worship were confined to one land. “ In
“ Judah was God known, his name was great
“ in Israel. Salvation was of the Jews.” But
there were many intimations given, that in
due time “ the joyful sound” should be known
by the gentiles. On this account they are ex-
horted to “ make a joyful noise unto the Lord.”
Instead of serving graven images and idols any
longer, they are commanded to “ serve the
“ Lord with gladness, and to come before his
“ presence with singing ;” for “ God loves a
“ cheerful” worshipper, as well as a cheerful
“ giver.” And there is not any part of the
service he has appointed, but what should be
performed with readiness and delight, for “ his
“ commandments are not grievous ; the yoke
“ of our Redeemer is easy, and his burthen is
“ light.”

The exhortation here given to the gentiles
implies a prediction, that the religious worship
of the New Testament church should be more
spiritual

spiritual and pleasant than that of the old; inasmuch as it should be disburdened from those carnal and cumbersome ceremonies which “gendered to bondage.” The allusion in the text is to the children of Israel, when they approached to the altar of God with their sacrifices. But as the words relate to the times of the gospel, they inform us, that the sacrifices which now please the Lord better than an ox, or a bullock, or rams, or lambs, are those of praise and thanksgiving. “By Christ,” we are exhorted in the New Testament, to “offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, giving thanks to his name.”

In discoursing on the text let us take a view,

FIRST, Of the gates and courts of the Lord, and consider what we are to understand by them. And,

SECONDLY, Of the temper of mind with which we are to enter into them, or the offering we are to bring, when we come before God; “thanksgiving and praise.”

FIRST,

FIRST, Let us take a view of the gates and courts of the Lord.

They are mentioned in scripture both literally and spiritually.

When David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the temple, which "he had by the spirit," the courts of the Lord are spoken of, which surrounded the holy house. One was for the priests, and the other for the Israelites in common. Both were encompassed with walls. In the outward wall there were four principal gates, one toward the east, another to the west, a third to the north, and a fourth to the south; typifying, that the redeemed of the Lord shall be collected together from every quarter. At each of these gates, Levites, who are called porters, attended, to keep those who were ceremonially unclean from entering in. Of this office David speaks, when he says, "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

Now

Now, that these gates and courts had a spiritual signification, is evident from several passages of scripture; for we read, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob;" and "they that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." And when the prophet Isaiah speaks of the church of Christ under the gospel dispensation, he says, "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation, which keepeth the truth, may enter in." Having this authority, we are then to consider the gates and courts, of which the text speaks, as figures of those evangelical institutions which are of a public nature. The idea is grand and instructive. It informs us, that when we attend on the worship of God, we approach as subjects into the presence of their sovereign. With a view to the gospel church it is predicted, that it shall come to pass, that "every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles." The meaning is, that the gentiles shall have free, full, and constant
access

access to the house of God, to whom they shall pay their homage as their spiritual monarch ; that they shall come as near to him, as their condition in this life admits, but shall, at the same time, be sensible of his majesty and glory, that he is the King of nations, and the King of faints.

When therefore it is said, " Enter into his " gates, and courts," we are to understand it as a call to the gentiles to draw near to Jehovah " the true God, the everlasting King," in the appointments of his worship. The first verse is a key to open the meaning of the whole psalm. " Make a joyful noise unto the " Lord, all ye lands : " not the land of Israel only, but the countries and islands afar off. Let them enter into the gates and courts of the gospel church, which is the temple of the Lord ; and renouncing their idols, let them worship the living God. Many such calls are given in the Old Testament, which contain prophecies, that the heathens shall be obedient to them : " From the rising of the sun to the " going down of the same, my name shall be " great among the gentiles ; and in every place " incense

“incense shall be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts.” We frequently find, that New Testament worship is described in phrases borrowed from the ceremonies of the law. Thus God promises to “bring the sons of the stranger to his holy mountain, and make them joyful in his house of prayer;” and then it is added, “Their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.” The apostle Peter explains it, when he says to all true christians, “Ye are built up a spiritual house,” built on Christ the only foundation, “an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” Moreover, it is predicted, that sinners of the gentiles shall be gathered into the church. “The gentiles shall come to thy light; the isles shall wait for me; the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls; thy gates shall be open continually, they shall not be shut day nor night.” These expressions point out, that there shall be a great accession to the church in the days of

the gospel. The gates shall not be shut against any who are made willing to enter; nor will the Lord of the temple say to such, "When ye come to appear before me, who has required this at your hands, to tread my courts?" Instead of refusing them acceptance, he commands their attendance, and encourages them to come; for "he has made a feast of fat things unto all people," gentiles as well as jews, and he says, "Come, for all things are now ready."

I now proceed to shew you,

SECONDLY, With what temper of mind we ought to come to the house of the Lord, or what is the offering we are to bring, when we appear before him in his courts.

Under the law, the injunction was very strict, that none of the jews should appear before him empty. Every one was to bring a sacrifice; the poor as well as the rich. It teaches us, that under the gospel, whenever we come into his sacred presence, we are to bring an offering; and if we bring the sacrifice of
Christ

Christ with us in the hand of faith, as our atonement, we shall also offer the sacrifices of righteousness.

In the text we are commanded to enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. One would think, that as we are to approach the Majesty of heaven and earth, we should be ordered to come with the most profound reverence and humility. As we have in multiplied instances offended him, we should come with deep repentance and self-abasement. And so we always ought; remembering not only our natural distance as creatures, but our moral distance as sinners. Nor is such a penitent frame inconsistent, but closely connected with the voice of joy and praise. For who are most thankful to God, but they who are most sensible of their offences and unworthiness? Instead, therefore, of entering into his gates and courts as the jews did, with the sacrifices of beasts and birds, we are commanded to enter with our thank-offerings; for “the Lord will be served with joyfulness and gladness of heart for the abundance of all things;” and “whoso offereth praise, glorifieth him.”

This, my friends, is a disposition of heart, from which we are naturally alienated. As unholy, we are unthankful. A pharisee indeed may say, "God, I thank thee;" but for what does he thank God? Why, that he is not as other men are; at the same time that, in his own conceit, he makes himself to differ from others. At best, it is no more than a compliment paid to the Almighty. There is no cordial thankfulness, till we are convinced, that by our transgressions we have forfeited every mercy, and deserved the severest punishment. If we are thankful at all, we shall complain to God of our ingratitude. Nor can we be thankful from the heart for our temporal comfort, until we are made partakers of spiritual blessings. Then we shall adore the divine goodness, and say with David, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?"

I shall now lay before you those mercies, which demand our grateful acknowledgments to God, whenever we enter his gates, and join in the public services of the sanctuary. I begin at the lowest step.

1. Come

1. Come into his courts, sensible of his goodnefs in giving you ability.

It is no small mercy to enjoy a fufficient degree of health to capacitate us for an attendance on the worship of God. Some are sick and weak, and some are fallen asleep. Is there not cause for thankfulness, not only that our lives are prolonged, but also that we are able to appear in the house of our God? "He is our life, and the length of our days;" and every measure of natural strength is of his imparting.

2. Enter his gates with thanksgiving for the continuance of external liberty.

When the psalmist was driven from the house of God into exile, how ardently did he breathe for freedom of access to it. "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord." How thankful would our pious ancestors have been, to have had their lot in all points as our's, to be assured, as we are, from the highest authority, of protection in the enjoyment of our civil and religious liberties. We may open our doors for public worship

whenever we will, having nothing to fear from any quarter. Let every one say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul."

3. Come with thanksgiving and praise for a standing ministry, and a variety of divine ordinances.

"There are," as the apostle observes, "diversities of gifts" among the ministers of Christ, and "differences of administration." Yet let none say, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos." For in "the diversities of gifts" there is "the same spirit," and in "the differences of administration the same Lord." The word, sacraments, prayer, and praise, these are the institutions of our dear Redeemer. Our spiritual helps are the purchase of his cross, and the gifts of his throne. And when his ordinances are administered agreeably to the rules of the gospel, certainly many thanksgivings are due.

4. Enter into his gates with praise, that there is not only a variety of instituted means, but a large profusion of spiritual blessings, a great plenty in our Father's house.

Our

Our Lord is spoken of, in the book of Proverbs, under the character of Wisdom. There we read of a stately building, which signifies his church, and of a table furnished with the richest entertainment, to denote the sure mercies and special consolations of the gospel, all suited to the necessities and the taste of an immortal and renewed soul. In a psalm, in which the sufferings of Christ and the conversion of the gentiles are minutely predicted, it is promised, “The meek shall eat and be satisfied, “they shall praise the Lord that seek him;” they shall feed by faith on that sacrifice, whereby atonement was made for sin; they shall live on the fulness of the Redeemer, shall receive from him the royal dainties of heaven; and shall say, “Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.”

5. Enter into the gates and courts of the Lord with thanksgiving and praise for the promise of the holy Spirit.

All our attendances on evangelical worship are of no effect, unless we possess an evangelical frame of mind. Such a temper it is not

in our ability to produce. It is “not by the
“might, nor by the power” of ministers, “but
“by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts.” The
apostle Paul, speaking of himself as “the mi-
“nister of Jesus Christ to the gentiles, minis-
“tring the gospel of God,” says, “that the
“offering up of the gentiles might be accept-
“able, being sanctified by the holy Spirit.”
Well, therefore, may “the gentiles glorify
“God for his mercy.” For if the holy Spirit
were not given, the apostle, and consequently
every other faithful minister, would labour in
vain. Not a sinner would be converted, nor
a distressed christian comforted. Yea, the most
confirmed believer has need of being strength-
ened by the Spirit in every religious duty, un-
der every burthen, and against every tempta-
tion. No wonder then, that the psalmist is so
importunate in prayer for the continuance of
his presence; “take not thy holy Spirit from
“me, but uphold me with thy free Spirit.”

Now, when we come to public ordinances,
we should remember with thankfulness the
necessity of the Spirit, who is promised to ac-
company them with his efficacious blessing.

Let

Let me ask you, whether you have a desire, that this divine agent would assist you in your devotions, and bless the means of grace to your spiritual advantage. If so, now is the time to lift up your souls in some such ejaculations as these: “ Incline, O Lord, my heart to thy
“ testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn
“ away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and
“ quicken thou me in thy way. Let the en-
“ trance of thy word give light. Thy Spirit
“ is good, lead me into the land of upright-
“ nefs.” Once more,

6. Enter into his gates and courts with praise for the manifold mercies already conferred on you.

O how numerous are the favours of our supreme Benefactor, with respect to the present life! Daily provision for the body, preservation in journeys, the enjoyment of friends; deliverances in seasons of danger, recoveries from sickness and pain, success in our undertakings, especially for spiritual blessings, a love to the word, nourishment by it, and strength against sin. Shall I say more? The time
would

would fail me to reckon up in order the mercies of the Lord. They are beyond computation. But what returns have been made? "The" stupid "ox knows his owner, and the" more stupid "ass his master's crib;" but many that call themselves christians "know not, nor consider" the hand whence every one of their comforts springs. "O let young men and maidens, old men and children praise the name of the Lord;" especially you, my friends, who are partakers of the grace and salvation of the gospel, who are made alive to God through Jesus Christ. How lively should you be in shewing forth his praises! Ought you not to enter into his courts with thanksgiving for what he has done for your souls? Should not each of you say with David, "I will praise thee, O Lord, my God; with all my heart, and I will glorify thy name for evermore; for great is thy mercy towards me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell?" Some of you can bless God for your afflictions, because he has instructed you by them, and comforted you in them. You can say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." If any of you say, I
am

am in doubt, and greatly fear, that he has not put me among his children. Well, but can you say with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;" and with Jonah, "I am cast out of thy fight, yet I will look again towards thy holy temple?" Are you sensible of your unworthiness of mercy, and of your desert of the divine anger for ever? Then you have ground for rejoicing, and matter for thanksgiving. "And let your praise be of him in the congregation."

Upon the whole, you see, that what the Lord requires of us is a reasonable and a pleasant service. You expect to be thanked for the favours you confer on your fellow creatures; and are you unmindful of, and unthankful to that God, on whom you continually depend? Will ye thus requite the Lord? What! Not a return of gratitude for ten thousand mercies? "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil." Dr. Goodwin, in his treatise, called "The Return of Prayer," has this remark. "Prayer and thanks are like the double motion of the lungs. The air that is sucked in by
" prayer

“ prayer, is breathed forth again by thanks.”
Or, as Mr. Bradbury expresses it, “ Prayer
“ and praise are the lungs of a christian. By
“ the one he draws in a happy life from hea-
“ ven, and by the other he breathes it back to
“ him who gave it.”

“ Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to
“ receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and
“ strength, and honour, and glory, and bles-
“ sing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and
“ power, be unto him that sitteth on the
“ throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and
“ ever. Amen.”

NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL RAIN.

SERMON II.

EZEKIEL XXXIV. 26.

And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing. And I will cause the shower to come down in his season : there shall be showers of blessing.

IN this chapter, the return of the children of Israel from their captivity to their own country is predicted and promised, as a signal and singular mercy : and is to be considered by us, as a mighty and marvellous work of God ; and also, as a type and figure of that greater salvation, of which Christ is the author. It was not unusual for the prophets, when they foretold the former, to carry their thoughts farther, and take occasion to speak of the latter. Thus does the prophet Ezekiel in the chapter
before

before us. In verses 23, 24, Christ is revealed as that "one shepherd," under whose conduct and care both jews and gentiles should be gathered. He is called by the name of "David," to shew that he was to spring from that patriarch's loins; that he should reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and that he is that beloved one, which the word "David" signifies, in whom all true believers are accepted of God to everlasting life. In verse 25, God says, "I will make with them a covenant of peace, and I will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land; and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods." The words, as they relate to the children of Israel, contain a promise, that when they return to their own country from their captivity, they should have a quiet and safe abode in it. Those places which were before dangerous to dwell in, should be free from annoyance. Taking the passage in an evangelical sense, it contains a promise, that by virtue of the covenant of grace and peace, which God makes with his people, they shall be protected from the cruel and malicious designs of their spiritual adversaries. Then come, in the words
of

of the text, "I will make them and the places
"round about my hill a blessing," &c. By
the hill of God, we are to understand Mount
Sion, which in another place is called God's
holy hill, because of the temple, where the
symbols and pledges of the divine presence
were fixed. Then he promises to make his
professing people at Jerufalem, "and the
"places round about his holy hill a blessing:"
that is, he would make them a prosperous and
happy people through the country: so that
their pagan neighbours, seeing the abundant
goodness of God manifested to Israel, should be
constrained to acknowledge, that they were the
blessed of the Lord. Suitable to this we read,
"It shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse
"among the heathen house of Judah and
"house of Israel, so will I save you, and ye
"shall be a blessing." It follows in the text,
"I will cause the shower to come down in his
"season, there shall be showers of blessing."
The meaning is, that the land which lay de-
solate during the captivity, shall yield its in-
crease.

I shall

I shall consider the passage, first in a civil and literal, and then in a figurative and spiritual sense.

Taking it in a civil and literal sense, it is a promise that the children of Israel should be restored to their civil and religious privileges; and that the mercies of divine Providence should be conferred upon them in a plentiful degree.

It was a wonderful instance of the power of God over the heart of king Cyrus, that he should be stirred up to let go his captives. But “the hearts of kings are in the hands of the Lord.” When the time to favour Sion was come, every stumbling-block was taken out of the way. The people went up to their own land in troops, and were settled after their old estate. Liberty was granted to build the temple, and to worship God according to his law. And it is very observable, that from that time forward they worshipped him without any mixture of idolatry, or inclination to it. When so great a monarch as Cyrus shewed such peculiar

cular favour to the poor despised jews, their reproach was wiped away, their credit was recovered, and they were held in reputation by the nations round about them. If an earthly soveraign were to extend his favour to a person of low degree, it would presently gain him respect from others. No sooner was Mordecai advanced by Ahafuerus, than he was courted by the heathen, as well as applauded by his own countrymen.

But more than this is couched in God's making his professing people, and "the places round about his holy hill, a blessing." Their restoration to their own land was such a marvellous work, that the very heathen said, "The Lord has done great things for them." And so good an effect had this revolution upon some idolaters, as to profelyte them to the jews' religion. For we read of those, who "separated themselves unto the children of Israel from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel." This, I apprehend, was going farther than "those heathens went in Mordecai's time, who became jews, because the fear of the jews fell upon
F "them:"

“ them :” for it seems to have been altogether a voluntary separation: Its being the fruit of their own choice, and the effect of conviction, is a proof, that God’s favourite people were made a blessing to them.

Again, consider that part of the promise which relates to temporal mercies, which God said he would confer upon the jews, when they returned from their captivity. “ I will
 “ cause the shower to come down in his sea-
 “ son, there shall be showers of blessing.” The happy consequence is mentioned in the next verse. “ And the tree of the field shall yield
 “ her fruit, and the earth shall yield her in-
 “ crease.” To this agrees that passage, “ The
 “ seed shall be prosperous, the vine shall give
 “ her fruit, and the ground shall give her in-
 “ crease, and the heavens shall give their dew,
 “ and I will cause the remnant of this people
 “ to possess all these things.” Now, what could the jews desire more, when they came back to their own country, than these things which God promised them ; viz. temporal and spiritual blessings ? “ Godliness has the pro-
 “ mise of the life that now is, as well as that
 “ which

“ which is to come.” They to whom God gives all the sure mercies of the covenant, have no ground to fear his concern for the body. The land of Canaan, which God is said “ to espy for the children of Israel,” had natural advantages above other countries. Moses, in the description he gives of it, says, “ It is not as the land of Egypt (where there was little or no rain) but it drinks water of the rain of heaven.” Frequently we read of the former and latter rain. The showers came down in their season, and were a blessing upon the earth. Let us, therefore, look into the material or natural world, and then spiritualize the subject.

There is scarcely any thing in the course of nature, of which the scripture speaks more largely, than the rain; which, philosophers tell us, is nothing else, but water divided by the heat of the sun, into very small invisible parts ascending in the air; till encountering the cold, it is condensed by degrees into clouds, and descends in drops.

1. Showers of rain are the sole production of God's almighty power.

He says in the text, "I will cause the showers to come down." Though it be first a vapour exhaled from the earth, and carried up into the region of the air, yet as it descends from above upon us, it may be said to come down from heaven. It is therefore called in scripture "the rain of heaven." In many passages God asserts it as his prerogative to give it. The prophet Jeremiah speaks of a great drought and dearth in the land, which came to pass for the transgressions of the people; and then says in his address to God, "Are there any among the vanities of the gentiles (meaning their idols) that can cause rain?" No, not one of them. "Or can the heavens give showers?" No, not of themselves: for the clouds are only second causes. If "they be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth." But it is when the Author of Nature pleases. "Art not thou he, O Lord our God? therefore we will wait on thee, for thou hast made all these things."

“ things.” Moreover, we read this instruction, “ Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain.” Here then is a work far surpassing the power, the art, and the skill of man. Nor is it a chance that happens to us. Not a drop of rain falls, but it calls God father. “ The rain has a father, and he has begotten the drops of the dew.” The clouds drop down; not only by his knowledge, but in pursuance of his purpose. For the scripture tells us, that “ God made a decree for the rain.”

Well then, let us trace this matter to its source. Do the showers fall upon the earth? It is the Lord God who causes it to rain. The commonness of the event is the occasion of our overlooking the divine hand. But the natural atheism of the heart is the criminal cause. When Job speaks of the great and wonderful works of God, he mentions this particular, “ He gives rain on the earth, and sends waters on the fields.”

2. The scripture takes notice of the difference and diversity of showers.

Those that are gentle, and those that are impetuous, both are the work of God. "He makes small the drops of water," and so forms the clouds; "they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof, which the clouds do drop, and distil upon man abundantly." And in the next chapter we read, that "He saith to the snow, be thou on the earth, likewise to the small rain and the great rain of his strength." It is a wonderful instance of divine goodness, that the rain does not descend upon us in cataracts or torrents, as in some countries, but in drops. "God binds up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them." Whether it be the small rain, or the great, or a thunder-storm, they are equally the rain of his strength; for his power produces them; and they ought to be observed alike in the distribution, as the work of God.

3. The

3. The scripture takes notice of the sovereignty of divine Providence in giving rain on the earth.

In this, as well as in every other respect, the Almighty does according to his pleasure. The great Lord and Disposer of the natural and moral world thus speaks, “ I caused it to rain
“ on one city, and caused it not to rain on an-
“ other city, and the piece whereupon it rained
“ not withered.” Thus “ the clouds are turn-
“ ed about by his counsels, that they may do
“ whatsoever he commands them on the face
“ of the world in the earth.” O that we may learn from this very circumstance our dependance on God, who exercises his sovereignty through his whole dominion. He could cause fultry weather to scorch the fruits of the land, and to waste and wither the corn. But the rain comes down according to his direction and appointment, in what measure and in what places he pleases.

4. I observe, that God has various purposes, and different ends to answer in sending showers of rain on the earth.

So we read, that “ he causes the rain to come, whether for correction, or for his land, “ or for mercy.” It sometimes comes “ for correction.” The Almighty makes use of it as a token of his displeasure. There is a sweeping rain which leaves no food. I need not particularly enumerate what damages are caused by the overflowing rains. On the other hand, he causes the rain to come on the land “ for mercy.” The earth is fertilized, and his paths drop down fatness upon us. The very same thing, according to the measure where-with it is given, may be either a calamity or a comfort. Among the good things which God promises in his word, he speaks of “ rain in its “ season.” So in the text, “ I will cause the “ shower to come down in his season.” And when this is the case, they are showers of blessing, they prove beneficial.

I shall now treat the subject in a *spiritual* and *evangelical* manner.

FIRST, I shall shew what are those showers, which the Lord causes to come down upon the souls of men ; and,

SECONDLY,

SECONDLY, The fruit and effect of these heavenly showers. They shall be made a blessing to others.

FIRST, What are those showers of blessing, which the Lord causes to come down upon the souls of men ?

We are not hereby to understand the mercies belonging to the present world; which, though they are earthly, may be said to come down from heaven, inasmuch as they are the gifts of God. Let the medium of communication be what it will, they are the products of the divine bounty. God makes whom he will the instrument of good. He opens or shuts the hearts and hands of men as he pleases.

Even with respect to temporal supplies, the sovereign Lord of the universe makes a great difference, as he does with the rain. On some people the good things of divine Providence descend in showers, whereby they are abundantly provided for : while others receive, as it were, only a few drops ; they have only a pittance.

tance. Every good gift comes from above; food, raiment, health, and every other comfort appertaining to the body. The Lord is to be acknowledged in all. You have nothing but that which you have received. And, if sensible of your unworthiness of any mercy, you will admire the goodness of God in the provision he makes for you.

But, God has provided better things for them who love him, even spiritual blessings, which he showers upon their souls. Here he abounds, and superabounds. For he blesses them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus. Their souls are the soil upon which he pours them, with this intent, that they may bring forth good fruit in their conversation.

The prophet Hosea speaks of "the Lord raining righteousness on his people." Righteousness is a very comprehensive word; it includes every thing which can make them happy.

1. The righteousness of Christ, is as seasonable to a soul convinced of sin, as showers of rain are to the parched earth.

Mr. Henry observes upon that passage—
“Some apply it to Christ, *he* shall rain
“righteousness upon you, that everlasting
“righteousness which he has brought in. It
“is foretold of the Messiah, He shall come
“down like rain on the mown grass.” If
we be convinced by the Holy Spirit, that
we have violated the law of God, and for our
transgression deserve everlasting destruction;
to whom are we to look for a righteousness
which suits our condition, and satisfies our
consciences? If we look to our own perform-
ances, we shall be woefully disappointed. We
must look upward to that God against whom
we have sinned; for our help can come from
none beside. “Their righteousness is of me,
“saith the Lord.” Now, the gospel brings
these glad tidings, that poor, guilty, self-con-
demned sinners may be furnished with a
righteousness from heaven. The eternal Son
of God condescended to be made man, that
he

he might become "the Lord our righteous-
 "ness." His obedience unto death as a surety,
 is that conformity to the law, which God
 places to the account of all who believe. A
 poor convinced sinner finds that this righteous-
 ness is as seasonable and welcome to the soul,
 as showers of rain can be to the parched earth.
 "Drop down ye heavens from above, and let
 "the skies pour down righteousness. Let the
 "earth open, and let them bring forth salva-
 "tion, and let righteousness spring up to-
 "gether. I the Lord have created it." When
 David mentions the trouble which filled his
 soul, arising from a sense of sin, he alludes to
 a hot, dry season of the year; "My moisture
 "is turned into the drought of summer,"
 when all nature wanted rain. Now, that bless-
 ing which gave relief to his troubled con-
 science, came down from a sin-pardoning
 God. "Blessed is the man, whose transgres-
 "sion is forgiven, whose sin is covered."
 When the apostle quotes the passage, he thus
 explains it: "David describes the blessedness
 "of the man to whom God imputeth righte-
 "ousness without works."

Now,

Now, I say, if your soul resemble a dry and thirsty land which opens its mouth for rain, if you be parched as it were with a sense of the divine wrath due for sin; then will the righteousness of Christ be highly acceptable to you. It will be like rain on the gaping earth. It will pacify an accusing conscience, because it satisfies a righteous God.

2. By "showers of blessing," which God causes to come down on the soul, we are to understand also the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit.

These are as seasonable and as necessary to the inward man, as rain is to the ground. O how barren are these souls of ours even under the means of grace, unless we partake of the influences of the Spirit of grace! The heart of man, which is departed from the Lord, is like the heath in the desert, and the parched places in the wilderness. And, not till we are enabled to discern this our condition, shall we look up to that grace, which the Lord has provided in his covenant, and promised in the gospel: grace to help in time of need; given
in

in a way of righteousness, as the purchase of Christ's precious blood; those influences and operations of the Spirit, called the "supply of the Spirit of Jesus;" which satisfy and refresh the soul, as showers of rain do the earth. "I stretch out my hands to thee, my soul thirsteth after thee as a thirsty land." If you know any thing of this spiritual thirst, nothing less will give content than heavenly influences. And,

3. We must bring divine consolations into the account.

Not only justifying, renewing, and assisting grace, but comforting grace, is like a refreshing and reviving shower. Divine consolations are promised in the gospel, and to be expected in the way of righteousness. When a believer is distressed, cast down, and disquieted; nothing will cheer and rejoice his heart, but what comes from the God of all comfort. If the Lord speak peace, who shall give trouble? A word of promise brought to remembrance, and applied by the Holy Spirit, will put gladness into his heart. It is like a shower which God causes

causes to come down in his season. A word in season, how good is it! Then is the spirit of the humble, and then is the heart of the contrite one revived.

SECONDLY, I proceed to show the happy fruit and effect of these heavenly showers, with reference to our fellow men.

The words of the text may be read thus; "I will make them and the places round about my holy hill a blessing; FOR, I will cause the shower to come down in his season." The latter part of the verse may be taken for the cause or reason, why God makes his people a blessing. They are first blessed of him, and then they are made a blessing to others in the places round about them. So God promised to Abraham, "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing."

Here we are to observe, that when God blesses any of the children of men with spiritual blessings, he thereby makes them a blessing in the earth. Separate the good from the rest of mankind; what remains but an accursed race? The holy seed are the substance
of

of a nation. When God was about to bring ruin on the Jewish nation for their impieties, a righteous person is represented as pleading for them, "Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine
 " is found in the cluster, and one saith destroy
 " it not (he puts in this plea), for a blessing is in
 " it." The plea was prevalent; for the Lord says, " So will I do for my servants' sake, that
 " I may not destroy them all." It is like Abraham's interceding for Sodom, " Wilt thou de-
 " stroy the righteous with the wicked?" If there had been such a blessing in that abominable city, if but ten righteous men had been there, God would not have consumed it. Hence therefore observe, of what great use and importance good men are in a wicked world. Now God makes his people a blessing several ways. They are a blessing by their prayers.

That is an awful passage, when God threatened that judgment should come on Jerusalem, he said to his prophet, " Pray not thou
 " for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer
 " for them, neither make intercession to me;
 " for I will not hear thee." They were arrived to such a pitch of wickedness, that God
 would

would not be intreated for them. It implies, what great power and interest praying people have with God. The story is commonly known of Mary Queen of Scots, that she said, "I fear John Knox's prayers, more than an army of ten thousand men." O, my friends, if we would be a blessing to our country, let us pray to the Lord for it; for, in the peace thereof shall we have peace. I doubt not, that many an awful judgment is averted from us, and many mercies are communicated to us, by means of the fervent cries and supplications of the righteous.

2. God makes his people a blessing to others by their good conversation.

Solomon says, "The lips of the righteous feed many." The idea is, that spiritual discourse is spiritual food. To the shame of many professors, what a great deal of unprofitable talk is among them, and words that do no good! So that there is need of the exhortation given by the apostle: "Let

"no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the

G

"use

“use of edifying.” Even the wicked are so far the better for the reproofs and counsels of the righteous, as that thereby they are many times restrained. O that we were faithful, in this matter to give every one his portion ! And let them who fear the Lord speak often one to another.

3. God makes his people a blessing to others by their example.

It is grating, it is cutting, to hear from the mouths of some, “There is a professor of religion : see how irregular and loose is his walk ; see what liberty he takes even on a “Lord’s day.” But, my friends, we are not to follow any to do evil. If we would be a blessing to others, let us set before us that pattern, which the word of God commands and commends. Copy after Christ. Be ye holy and humble ; for he is holy and humble in heart. Once more,

4. God makes his people a blessing by their acts of beneficence.

Indeed

Indeed too many professors are "like empty vines, they bring forth fruit to themselves." The gospel and the interest of religion, they have no concern to maintain. But surely it will be found, that if God send down showers of blessing on the soul; if he thus water them, they will water others, they will refresh their bowels, which is the way to an increase: for "he that waters shall be watered himself." The streams of his bounty shall turn to good account.

On the whole,

1. In how dreadful a state are all the ungodly!

They are like barren ground. They bear thorns and briars, are nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. Some are direct plagues on the earth; and all the unconverted being far from God, are his abhorrence. Even under the preaching of the word, which is compared to rain, what numbers of professors are there, whose hearts are hearts of stone! The word makes no more impression, than rain does

upon a rock ; but runs off from them, and gets no admiffion. Inftead of receiving it, they rather refift it. They have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wifdom is in them? And,

2. If we would be made real bleffings to others, and ufeful efppecially to their fouls, which ought to be the grand concern, then let us be fervent in prayer for heavenly communications, that the Lord would fend down fhowers of bleffings on us ; that our fouls may flourish in grace and holinefs ; and that his word and ordinances may be as the clouds which pour down righteoufnefs. Then fhall we bring forth “ the fruits of righteoufnefs which are by Jefus Chrift unto the praife and glory of God.”

THE BENEFIT OF EARLY DISCIPLINE.

SERMON III.

LAMENTATIONS III. 27.

It is good for a man, that he bear the yoke in his youth.

JEREMIAH has frequently been called the weeping prophet. And there were two things, which were the causes of his tears; the sins of the people, to whom he prophesied, and the desolations, which were brought on his country. Both are mentioned by him in an affecting passage of his prophecy. “If ye
“will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret
“places for your pride; and mine eyes shall
“weep sore, and run down with tears, because
“the Lord’s flock is carried away captive.” Both are repeated in this book of his Lamentations.

The chapter from which I have taken my text, contains a description of a real believer's life, which is made up of afflictions and comforts, fears and hopes, prayers and praises. At one time the prophet cries out, "My strength
" and my hope is perished from the Lord." At another, "The Lord is my portion, faith
" my soul, therefore will I hope in him. The
" Lord is good to them that wait for him, to
" the soul that seeketh him. It is good that
" a man should both hope and quietly wait for
" the salvation of the Lord." Whether it be a salvation from temporary trouble, or a final exemption from all sin and sorrow, it is good to wait with patience for it. Then come in the words of my text; "It is good for a man,
" that he bear the yoke in his youth." How contrary to this is the language of the men of the world! Many will say, it is good for a man to take his ease, to eat and drink and be merry; as life is short, let it be filled up with pleasure, as if that passage were to be taken in a literal sense; "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;"

“eyes;” little thinking on what follows;
“but know thou that for all these things God
“shall bring thee into judgment.”

In the text we are to consider,

FIRST, What is intended by “the yoke.”

SECONDLY, What is it for a man “to bear”
it.

THIRDLY, The time specified; “in his
“youth;” and,

FOURTHLY, The utility of it; “it is good”
for him.

FIRST, What is intended by the yoke.

The primary meaning of the word in this
passage is the bondage, which the jews suffer-
ed in Babylon. God commanded the prophet
to “make bonds and yokes, and put them on
“his neck in the sight of the people;” by
which signs and emblems they were given to
understand, that Nebuchadnezzar would come
and carry them, and make them serve with

rigour. "The yoke of my transgressions," says the prophet in the name of the people in general, "is bound by his hand; they are wreathed, and come up upon my neck." Because of their transgressions, the Lord bound this yoke upon them. They had made God to serve with their sins, and had wearied him with their iniquities; therefore he made them to serve their enemies in a strange land. It was an iron yoke, which that monarch laid very heavily both on the ancients of the people, and on their youths. The very mention of this should excite thankfulness to God, that our lot was cast, and is continued, in a land of freedom, under a mild and equitable government. We know nothing of that tyranny and slavery, which our ancestors endured, in matters both civil and ecclesiastical.

With respect to the yoke mentioned in the text, which it is good for a man to bear in his youth, commentators have understood it in a double sense.

1. For that religious service, which God has prescribed in his word, or that course of obedience, which he requires of us.

Thus

Thus the word *yoke* is to be understood, when the prophet says, “ I will get me to the
“ great men, and will speak to them ; for they
“ have known the way of the Lord, and the
“ judgments of their God ; but these have alto-
“ gether broken the *yoke*, and burst the *bonds*.”
What is called the way of the Lord, and the
judgments of God, in one part of the verse, is
explained in the other to be the yoke, and the
bonds which fasten it on the neck. The doc-
trine and the commandments, which they
were bound by the divine authority to observe
and do, were the yoke which the Lord put
upon them ; but through the infidelity and
pride of their hearts, they would not bear it.
They were determined to go on, gratifying
their sensual lusts and appetites, and would by
no means be restrained. The word is also to
be understood in this sense, where our Lord
Jesus Christ says, “ Take my yoke upon
“ you ;” receive my doctrine, and obey my
will. He calls the laws and statutes of his
kingdom his yoke and his burthen, and says,
“ they are easy and light.” So they were, in
opposition to that yoke, which the scribes and
pharisees laid upon the people ; for they bound
heavy

heavy burthens, and grievous to be borne, and laid them on men's shoulders. So they are likewise, in opposition to the servitude of sin and Satan.

The will of Christ is compared to a yoke, as it is bound upon us by him who is our Lord and sovereign. I mean, that we are under obligation "to do all things whatsoever he has commanded us." And they who are made "willing in the day of his power," experience "his yoke to be easy, and his commandments not to be grievous." There is far more real pleasure and satisfaction to be found in the ways of godliness, than in the ways of iniquity. But where corrupt nature is unsubdued, the obedience which the Lord requires is irksome and painful. It is accounted an intolerable yoke. And how often do we see this to be the case both of the rich and of the poor. Tell them, that it is their duty and their privilege also to be religious, "to deny ungodliness and wordly lusts; and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world;" "These are hard sayings, who can hear them?" It is a yoke upon the neck of their lusts; such a restraint, that

that they cannot endure it. Many young persons particularly think themselves wiser than their parents and teachers. They are impatient of contradiction. The good instruction which they receive, is as galling as a yoke; and they will not come under it. It is indeed a yoke upon their inordinate affections, and their irregular actions, designed to keep them within the bounds of reason, conscience, and religion. But they have loved pleasure, and after it they will go. It is in their own conceit, innocent freedom; but in the sight of God and all good men, it is the way to destruction. In this sense, it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth, to be in subjection to the revealed will of God, and to serve the Lord Jesus Christ; for he commands nothing but what tends to promote our truest interest and happiness; he prohibits nothing, but what is injurious to the soul, and in the end will prove its ruin. I proceed to shew,

2. That by the yoke here mentioned is to be understood affliction.

This

This seems to be the chief sense, the leading idea, because the prophet is speaking of the captivity. "I am the man," he says, "who have seen affliction by the rod of his wrath," meaning that great tribulation which God in his righteous anger inflicted on the disobedient jews. Now, this is applicable to trouble in general, whether it be personal, or relative, pain and sickness of body, losses in business, or disappointments and contradictions from those with whom we have to do. More especially let it be understood of bodily illness, to which youth as well as age is liable. It is a yoke laid on and kept on by the hand of God so long as he knows to be necessary; and whatever means are used for removing it, his time must be waited for. Every one sees the propriety of this metaphor. Affliction is a yoke, for it is burthenfome to nature. And when it is first laid on, too many are like a bullock unaccustomed to it. Under unsanctified afflictions they kick against God; and because they cannot reach him, they are fretful and quarrelsome with all around them. It is a yoke also upon the best of men, so far as it is tedious to
flesh

flesh and blood. In a few verses after the text, it is said, "Though he cause grief, yet he will have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." God causes grief, when he puts on the yoke. We all know, that soul and body act upon each other. As when one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, so the immortal part shares in the trouble. Thus the apostle says, "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous;" it is really so. Correction cannot be joyous on its own account, or for its own sake. Who desires to be afflicted in any form? We all do what is in us to get rid of it, but none can bid it welcome. A time of affliction cannot but be a season of grief and sorrow. On some the yoke is heavily laid; yet when compared with what many have experienced, it is light. God is pleased to keep it upon some for a long season. Nevertheless, compared with others, it is but for a moment. O how small a moment compared with eternal ages!

Well; affliction is a yoke which all men in a greater or less degree experimentally know;
but

but in the sense of the text very few bear it; which brings me,

SECONDLY, To shew what it is for a man to *bear* the yoke.

If by the yoke we understand the doctrine or will of God revealed in the scriptures, then by bearing it, the same thing is meant, as that which our Lord speaks of in the fore-cited passage; "Take my yoke upon you." The word in the Hebrew answers to the word in the Greek, and may be rendered *to take up*. It is good for a man that he take up, or submit to the discipline of the divine word. Now this supposes,

1. That the spirit of man is subdued, and conformed to that which God requires in his word.

We are all naturally diffident of the heavenly vision. Sinners in an unconverted state say in their hearts and practice, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords
" from

“ from us.” They will not cordially believe what the Lord has spoken ; and therefore they will not bend to the doctrines and laws of his word. There can be no bearing, no taking his yoke upon us, until the pride of the heart be brought down ; as the apostle speaks, “ The
“ weapons of our warfare are mighty through
“ God, to the pulling down of strong holds,
“ casting down imaginations, and every high
“ thing that exalteth itself against the know-
“ ledge of God, and bringing into captivity
“ every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

2. To bear the yoke is willingly to come under the government of the word.

Believing that what is revealed in scripture is indeed the word of God, and not of men, they therefore bow to his authority with all readiness, and receive it with meekness. They do not bring a preconceived scheme to the scriptures, and say, “ So far as they agree
“ to my apprehensions, we will believe them.” But they are convinced by the Holy Spirit, that it is their duty to credit whatever truths the word of God reveals, even though they cannot
not

not comprehend them with their finite powers. And moreover, however contrary the commandments of God are to the lusts of the flesh, yet they will make them the rules of their conduct towards both God and men. "They obey from the heart," as the apostle says, "that form of doctrine, which is delivered to them."

If again the word *yoke* signifies affliction, then to bear it is, as our Lord says, to "take up our cross," to endure with patience any and every trouble which is imposed upon us by the providence of God, whether it arise more immediately from himself, or from the subtlety and violence of men.

To bear the yoke of affliction implies,

1. That we discern and acknowledge the Lord himself, as him who has brought it upon us. "Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord, he against whom they sinned? Yes. Because they were not obedient to his law, he stirred up their adversaries against them. When Shimei

Shimei cursed and reviled David, the good man looked beyond second causes, and kept his eyes fixed upon the Lord, who sent the affliction. When Job was bereaved of his substance and his children at the same time, he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Let the trial be what it will, with which we are exercised, a proper sense of the hand of God will greatly help to silence our murmurings. "Be still, and know that I am God."

2. To bear the yoke of affliction is to submit ourselves to the sovereign will of divine Providence.

The Disposer of all events does according to his pleasure. He executes his purposes at the time, and in the way, which he knows to be best. It highly becomes us to say, "He is wise in heart and mighty in strength: Who ever hardened himself against him, and prospered?" Instead of hardening ourselves against him, we will meekly and quietly endure any trouble or calamity he lays upon us. He has authority

H

over

over us, and a right to afflict us in the most tender part. But be the cross, or the yoke, ever so burdensome, it is both our duty, and our comfort, to be resigned to it, and to say, "Let the Lord do to us that which is good in his sight." "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him."

I now pass on

THIRDLY, To consider the time here specified, when it is good for a man to bear the yoke; "in his youth."

As we have taken the word "yoke" in two senses, so we must adjust the meaning under the present head.

1. The younger part of life is the fittest season for the service of God.

The yoke of religion cannot be borne too soon. What an encomium does the apostle give to Timothy: "From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures." Happy is that family, where parents, from love to the souls of their

their children, instruct them in the knowledge of the truth, and teach them their duty to God and man. "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not" ordinarily "depart from it." Many have blessed God for a religious education, which has proved the means of conversion. Indeed "childhood and youth are vanity." Yet it is the best time, in which to remember their Creator, and devote themselves to his fear and service. Some of you know this by experience. You were enabled through grace to seek the Lord, and call upon him in early life. And instead of repenting, that you "feared the Lord from your youth," is it not your heart's desire and prayer to God, that others may begin sooner than you? Consider, my young friend, whether you are a child at home, or a servant abroad, if you be not a child of God, and a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are in a sinful and miserable state. And how unreasonable a part are you acting, to give the prime of your days, and the beginning of your strength, to your adversary the devil, who suggests to you, that it is time enough several years hence to mind the con-

cerns of religion : whereas you know not but “ this night your souls may be required of you.” Does not your own conscience tell you, that now the powers of nature are active and vigorous, and while you are free from the anxious cares of the world, this is the most proper time to be mindful of God, of your souls, and eternity ? O be persuaded to hearken to the voice of Christ, who says, “ I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me.” If you find him, you find the life of your soul for ever. But if you be determined to go in the way of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes, you may rejoice now, but you will mourn and lament hereafter.

2. Youth is the fittest season to bear the yoke of affliction.

Take it in a natural sense ; and when bodily strength is firm, and the animal spirits are lively, the yoke is borne with greater ease, than when the infirmities of years are added to it. Then “ the grasshopper of itself is a burthen.” But especially in a religious sense ;
there

there are some whom the Lord has deeply afflicted in their youth; who from that time cried unto him as their Father and their God. When they were going astray into forbidden paths, he put the yoke upon them, and turned them back to himself by the hand of his providence and grace. Manasseh was taken among the thorns; and when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord, and he heard him. This brings me,

FOURTHLY, To shew the utility of a man's bearing the yoke in his youth. "It is good for him."

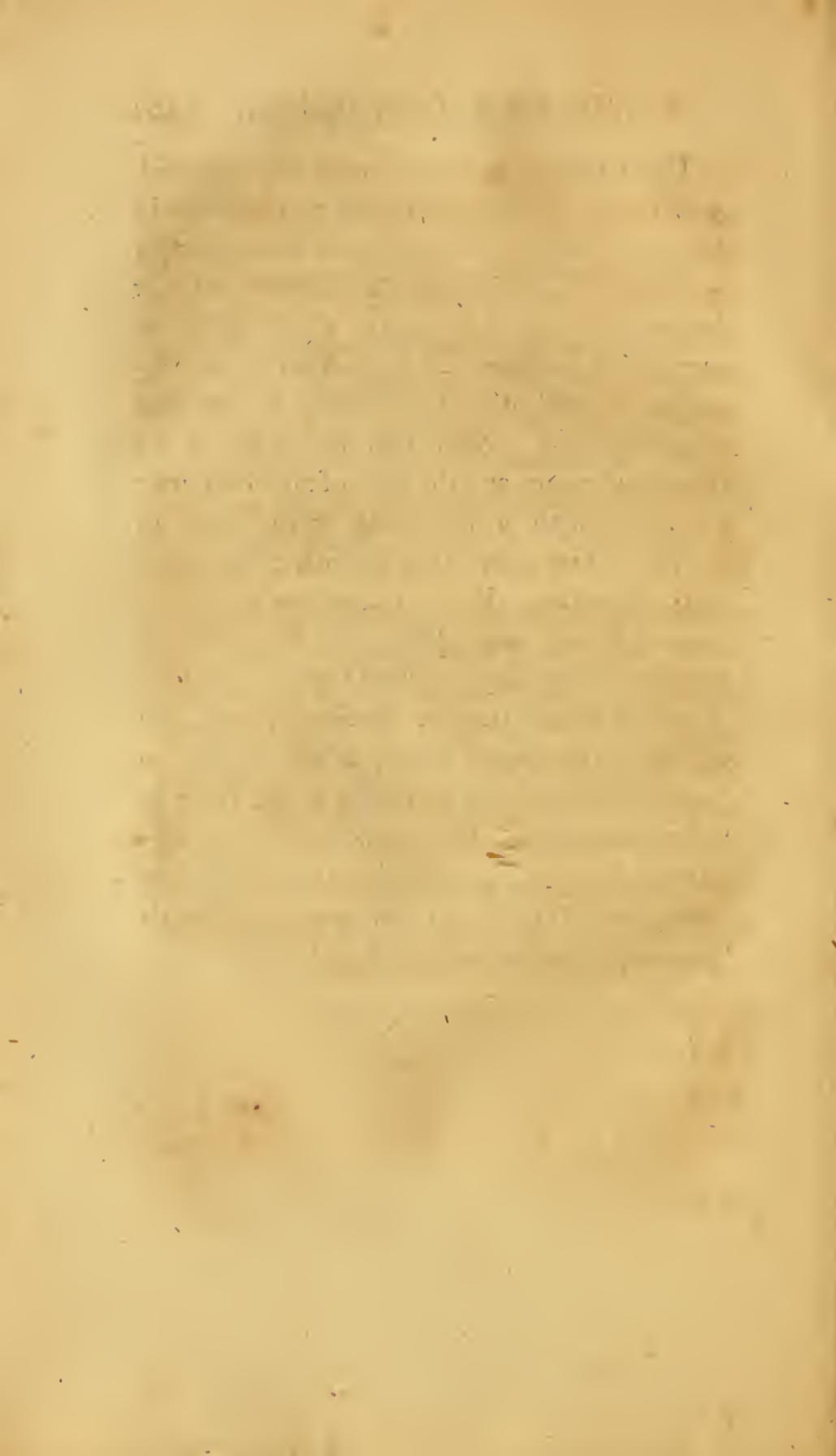
If we understand by the yoke, the rule of our duty, it is beyond all contradiction, most beneficial for any one to practise it in the morning of life. It is to lay up a stock of experiences for future time. That valuable commentator, Mr. Henry, observes, that "to engage in religion betimes will make duty more acceptable to God, and more easy to themselves." Certainly it redounds more to his glory, and conduces to their greater comfort. It is not in vain to serve God; it is not unprofitable to pray to him and keep his

ordinances at any time; least of all in the time of youth. Are there not instances of aged christians, who can look back on many years, and say, It was good for us that we knew the grace of God in our youth? It was their preservative from youthful lusts, and that which engaged them to walk in wisdom's ways, which were ways of pleasantness. When they were tempted to evil, they could not, they would not comply, because of the fear of God.

Again; if by the yoke we understand affliction, does not experience prove, that it has been productive of much spiritual advantage, to bear it in the days of youth? Some young persons have been thankful to God, that bodily afflictions were sanctified to the good of their souls. Terrified with the thoughts of dying, and of appearing before God, the Holy Spirit has put them on enquiring after Christ and salvation, and wrought in them a hope, that there was mercy for them; so that they can say with the psalmist, "It is good for me, that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes."

Upon

Upon the whole ; from what has been said, we may see the highest reason to acquiesce in the will of God. It is good for us to comply with his will, as it is revealed in his word ; for he reveals every thing there, which advances our eternal welfare. It is good for us to submit to the will of his providence, for he does all things well. Now that the yoke of his commandments, and the yoke of affliction, may be borne with a becoming spirit, both in youth, and in years ; that is, with cheerfulness and resignation ; let us remember that gracious promise, and plead it at the throne of grace, “ As thy days, so shall thy strength be.” Whether it be a time of obedience, or a time of trial, “ the Lord is ready, as well as able, to “ strengthen us with all might by his spirit in “ the inner man.” Let our hearts then be lifted up, while we cry unto him, that “ his grace “ may be sufficient for us, and his strength “ made perfect in our weakness.”



S E R M O N IV.

2 CHRONICLES XXXIII. 11, 12, 13.

Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him : and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.

MY design, from these words, is to set before you, the account which is recorded of the conversion of as great a sinner, as any mentioned in the book of God. Manasseh
was

was the son of Hezekiah, that eminently good king of Judah, who feared God above many. A circumstance is mentioned in 2 Kings xx. of this excellent man, which is very peculiar. "The Lord added to his days fifteen years," during which term Manasseh was born. It was about the third year of the fifteen. For when Hezekiah died, Manasseh succeeded him in the throne, being twelve years of age. As we do not read of his having another son, that which is very remarkable is this: If Hezekiah had been cut off by death, when his disease was in its own nature mortal, the line of David must have been broken, and the promise of the Messiah in his family left unfulfilled. I am ready therefore to think, when Hezekiah wept fore, and prayed to the Lord, on his being told by the prophet Isaiah, that he should die; that the good king was the more solicitous for his recovery, not only, because the tranquillity of his kingdom was then disturbed, and Jerusalem besieged by his enemies, but also, because he had at that time no son to succeed him, and consequently, the promise of the Messiah in the family of David would have been defeated.

This,

This, however, is certain. Manasseh, as soon as his good father was dead, though but twelve years of age, did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, after the abominations of the heathen. While Hezekiah was living, no doubt he gave his son the best instructions, and poured out many prayers for his soul; but all seemed to be lost. They who hated the reformation, which Hezekiah had undertaken in his kingdom, took the first opportunity to insinuate vile principles into the mind of the young king; and his depraved nature readily imbibed them. Here then the common observation was verified, that grace does not come by inheritance, or run in the blood. In a thousand instances it is seen, that children, some, while their parents are alive, and others, after they are dead, throw off their former restraints, and join hand in hand with the wicked. Such cannot sin at so cheap a rate, as they who never had a religious education. In every one by nature there is a stronger propensity to hearken to evil advisers, than to good.

The sacred history further informs us, how deeply corrupted Manasseh made himself. He
not

not only exceeded in wickedness the bad kings of Israel and Judah, but became worse than the heathen kings round about. I shall not enumerate the several species of abominations which are mentioned, but only that of murder, which he carried to the greatest height; so that "he filled Jerusalem with blood from one end to the other." Of this crying iniquity, we read, that "the Lord would not pardon it." We have the meaning in another place, where the Lord threatens, "I will cause them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem." Though the Lord pardoned Manasseh on his repentance, yet his shedding blood was a national crime. Many were concerned with him in this tragical work. And therefore it was charged upon the land, crying for public judgment. We see here, to what an extent of wickedness a man may be carried by his lusts, and yet be made at length a monument of saving mercy.

But were there none of Manasseh's subjects in the midst of his career, who gave him re-
proof

proof and admonition? Yes; the Lord spake to him, and to his people who joined with him in his abominations; but, it is said, they would not hearken. Prophets there were, who called to repentance, and denounced the judgments of heaven; and perhaps others united with them; but a deaf ear was turned to all the warnings given. And is not this the case of many sinners under the gospel, notwithstanding they are told with all faithfulness, of the peril of their transgressions, and what the end will be of them that go on in their trespasses? Their hearts are obstinate, and they will not believe.

Let us next observe the method which the Lord took, to bring about the conversion of Manasséh. “Wherefore the Lord brought upon them,” upon the king and his people, “the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, who took Manasséh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.” The king of Assyria here mentioned was Esarhaddon, the third son of Sennacherib, who reigned in his father’s stead. It is not probable, that he should send his officers

cers with their troops to take Manasseh captive, because of his abominable wickedness; but it was the Lord whom Manasseh provoked, who sent them; they were the rod of his anger, and the staff of his indignation. When they approached Jerusalem, who can describe the terror into which the inhabitants were thrown? They had no power to make resistance. And as for Manasseh their king, he was wholly dispirited, and fled to a place for security, which is said to be "among the thorns;" an expression, which I cannot suppose, as some do, is to be understood in a figurative sense, that he was perplexed in his counsels, and embarrassed in his affairs; as we say of a man in difficulties, he is in the briars. For though this was really the case, that he did not know how to extricate himself, yet by the thorns, I apprehend, some place is to be understood, where bushes and brambles grow, among which he imagined, he should be unseen, and unfought. The same word we have in another passage, which may help to explain the text. "When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, for the people were distressed, because the Philistines gathered themselves together
" against

“ against them, then the people did hide themselves in caves, and *in thickets*, and in “ rocks, and in high places, and in pits.” In like manner, when the Assyrians set themselves in battle array against Jerusalem, Manasseh got away as fast as he could to a thicket, a piece of ground all grown over with thorns, presuming that the enemy would little suspect his being there. But when they entered his palace, and did not find him, they sent out parties every way, and at length he was discovered, where he thought himself perfectly safe. Being now taken, he was confined closer than ever; for they bound him with fetters, or chains; and in this slavish state they carried him to Babylon. It is all conjecture, how long he had reigned before this trouble happened to him. But we are sure, that it did not happen by chance; for it is said, “ the Lord brought “ it upon him.” It is likewise mere conjecture, how long he was kept a prisoner in Babylon. But of this we are certain; it was the method which the Lord was pleased to take, in order to bring him to himself; so that he was sent into captivity for his spiritual good.

I shall

I shall now lay before you the several expressions whereby his conversion is described. Some things, however, of high moment are previously to be observed.

1. We are not to suppose, that Manasseh's affliction was any more than the occasion, or the means of his conversion.

If afflictions of themselves were capable of turning the heart of a sinner, how comes it to pass, that every sinner's heart is not turned, when he is afflicted? Yea, is it not frequently the case, that many grow worse? Their passions become more turbulent; they are "like a wild bull in a net." It may be said of them, as it was of that wicked king, Ahaz, that "in the time of their distress, they trespass yet more against the Lord." And to them God might say, as he said to the jews by the prophet Isaiah; "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more." It is true, there is something in affliction, which has a tendency to make the most abandoned wretch thoughtful and serious; for there is a conscience in man, which sometimes alarms his fears

fears of death and eternity. But it is not in the power of the severest rod, or of the heaviest affliction, to bring any man from his wanderings home to God; for if that were the case, then the effect would be accomplished in every one. Therefore,

2. It must be acknowledged, that it was the Lord, who turned the heart of Manasseh from the evil of his way:

Before he sought the Lord, and humbled himself; the Lord had been at work upon him. I speak not now in order of time but of nature, for the captivity into which he was brought, was made the occasion or the means of his conversion. It was the Lord who put the first good thought, the first religious desire into his heart, or it would never have been found there. We may justly imagine, that Manasseh, when he was carried to Babylon, instead of being indulged with the licentious pleasures of the court, was cast into solitary confinement, and probably lay there with the same chains, which were first fastened upon him. Here he began to bethink himself: “What a change is this, from a palace to
I “ a prison,

“ a prison, from liberty to bondage ! And more
 “ than that ; my wickedness has brought all
 “ this evil upon me. God, against whom I
 “ sinned with so high a hand, is righteous : I
 “ set at nought all his counsel, and I have de-
 “ served punishment not only here, but here-
 “ after.” Reflections of this sort, no doubt,
 came pouring in upon him. But who brought
 them to his mind ? Who set them home with
 efficacy ? We have in the prophecy of Jere-
 miah a lively description of a true convert,
 Ephraim in captivity bemoaning himself thus ;
 “ Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised,
 “ as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke ; turn
 “ thou me, and I shall be turned. After that
 “ I was turned, I repented.” This then is the
 work of God. He was the author of the con-
 version of Manasseh. And never was any one
 truly converted since, but by his powerful
 grace ; be the means or the occasion what
 they may, whether the word or the rod.

Having premised these things, let us now
 consider the several expressions by which Ma-
 nasseh's conversion is described ; or more pro-
 perly the effects, by which it was shewn to be
 genuine.

1. In his affliction; it is said, that he besought the Lord his God.

According to the original it is; he besought the face of the Lord his God. The same words are rendered in another place, "I intreated thy favour;" for the face of God is often put for his favour. Now it might be said of Manasseh, as it was said of Saul of Tarsus, "Behold he prayeth." What a wonder of grace was here! He had prayed before a thousand times to idols which could not help him. But now his heart is turned to the Lord, he renounced idolatry; "What have I to do any more with idols?" Now he intreats the favour of that God whom he had despised; that favour, in which all happiness consists. "He besought it;" the word signifies, "he implored it with earnestness and importunity." Now he saw himself undone, and would be so for ever, if he were not interested in it. With his whole heart therefore he cried for mercy.

I cannot pass over the relation in which Manasseh is said to stand to the Lord; "he besought the Lord his God." His good father

in the ordinance of circumcision had dedicated him to God. And now Manasseh is brought to his duty, he makes choice of the Lord, and gives his free and cordial consent to be his. Jehovah was the God of all the tribes of Israel by a national covenant. When they brake that covenant by going after other gods, they forfeited all right and title to the living and true God. But now upon his return, and renunciation of idolatry, Manasseh put in his claim to God, and said to him, "Thou art my God."

2. The next thing mentioned, which proves him to be a real convert, is, that "he humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers."

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, David and Hezekiah, these were his fathers; and the Lord was his God by special grace. Manasseh, before his conversion, was as proud as Pharaoh, when he said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" But now he humbled himself greatly before him; not as king Ahab did, when God threatened him with his judgments. For though the Lord took notice of him, and
said,

said, " See how Ahab humbles himself before me:" yet he returned to his wickedness. But Manasseh's humiliation was more inward; it was active and voluntary; his heart was contrite; his repentance was deep; he prostrated his soul before God, confessing his abominations both of heart and life, and loathed and condemned himself for them. He humbled himself, not so much for his affliction, as for his transgression. He was not only terrified with apprehensions of the divine anger, but was ashamed and confounded, because he had sinned against the God of holiness. It was such humiliation as we read of, where God says, " If, when I have brought them into the land of their enemies, their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity," or if they acknowledge, that God punished them less than their iniquities deserved; " if they submit themselves to me, then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, with Isaac, and with Abraham." O happy they, who humble themselves under the mighty hand of God; and welcome are those afflictions, which are

made the occasions of the humiliation of the soul.

3. The next thing observable in Manasseh is, that “ he prayed to God.”

It was observed before, that he besought his face or favour, which is the same as praying to him. But it is here repeated because of the happy consequence. He did not seek the Lord in vain. “ The Lord was intreated of him, “ and heard his supplication.” Having given him a heart to pray, he caused his ear to hear. This implies, that he pardoned all his iniquities, and accepted his person, for the sake of the promised Messiah; which was the manner of the divine procedure from the introduction of sin into the world. As there was always a necessity of a mediator, so the Messiah was regarded and believed in under that dispensation. “ Now, therefore, O our God, hear “ the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine on thy “ sanctuary for the Lord’s sake.” God, for Christ’s sake, was propitious to Manasseh; and

as a proof of his loving-kindness, it is said, he brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. He gave him favour in the eyes of the Assyrian monarch, who released him from his bonds, and restored him to his crown. It brings these words to my remembrance; “ I
“ will shew mercy to you, that he the king of
“ Babylon may have mercy upon you, and
“ cause you to return to your own land.” Hereupon, it is added in the text, “ Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.” He had now the witness in himself; his own experience confirmed it, that Jehovah, against whom he had sinned, and whom he had cast off, was the only living and true God. And from that time he resolved to serve him, and to cleave unto him. Accordingly, some following verses evidently prove, that he brought forth fruits meet for repentance. When he resumed the government of his people, he set himself to work a reformation, and happily effected it. But of this I cannot now speak particularly.

I shall now make some application of the subject.

1. In Manasseh we have an example of the abounding of sin, and of the superabounding of grace.

How his iniquity abounded, has been declared. He exceeded the heathens in transgression, and was a monster of wickedness. One would have as soon expected the conversion of such a tyrant and murderer as Nero, whom the apostle calls a lion. But behold and wonder; to this very man, to Manasseh, the grace of God did much more abound. From what God has wrought, we may argue what he is able to do. "Is there any thing too hard for the Lord?" Surely this astonishing change is recorded, to shew us the exceeding greatness of the power and grace of God. Moreover,

2. It is an encouragement against despair.

Haft-thou any friend or relation going on in a course of vice and wickedness, notwithstanding the solemn warnings and reproofs that are given? Never despair of him for Manasseh's sake. Still admonish and rebuke; and remember

ber to add fervent supplications for a blessing; and who knows but God will shew mercy?

And with respect to any who hear me, Do you behold yourselves in the light of the vilest sinners on earth, and fear, that you shall perish for ever? O consider! That divine hand, which plucked Manasseh as a brand from the burning, is able to deliver you. Despair not of your own salvation for Manasseh's sake. Once more,

3. God has various ways of bringing wandering sinners back to himself.

Manasseh would not hearken to the word of the Lord. The rod therefore was used to drive him from his iniquities. So we read, "If they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction, then he shews them their work and their transgression that they have exceeded. He opens also their ear to discipline, and commands that they return from iniquity." Have any of you, my friends, experienced the benefit of the rod? "Blessed is the man whom the Lord chastens, and teaches him out of his law."

“law.” If you have been taught the evil of your hearts, the vanity of the world, and your need of a Saviour, ascribe the glory to his rich and abundant grace. Make not light of any affliction, for God speaks to you by it. Dread the thought of growing more indifferent to the word and ordinances of God. Be earnest in prayer, that your afflictions, let them be of what kind they will, may be sanctified and set home upon you; and think upon that good word, “Call upon me in the day of trouble; “I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify “me.”

SERMON V.

MATT. XIV. 31.

*And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand,
and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of
little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*

THESE words are a part of a very affecting story concerning our Lord's power, and Peter's faith. We have the beginning of it in verse 22, where we are told, that our Lord constrained his disciples to go before him in a ship on the other side the sea Tiberias, while he sent the multitude away, whom he had miraculously fed; and when he had done this, he went up into a mountain apart to pray. Secret prayer was the practice of our Lord, and herein he set us an example, that we should follow

follow his steps. They that are conformed to him in holiness, are conformed to him in duty; and in this duty a true christian has an opportunity, as Christ had, of conversing with his heavenly Father, and of saying those things to him, which he would not choose to reveal to others. From our Lord's dismissing the multitude, and then going to pray, a serious commentator (Mr. Burkit) makes this remark, "That when we would wait on God in duty, we must send away the multitude of worldly cares, worldly thoughts, worldly concerns, and business." In verse 24, we read of the ship, or little vessel, the disciples were in, tossed with waves, because the wind was contrary. The disciples of Christ must not always expect a calm in their passage through life, but to be sometimes "tossed with tempests, and not comforted." Providential dispensations may appear contrary to their desires and hopes,

In verse 25, we have an account that our Lord went to them in the fourth watch of the night, or sometime after three in the morning, walking on the sea. He knew the difficulty and danger his disciples were in during the storm,

storm, and therefore came to them for their relief: but how amazing was his approach! He did not come after them in another ship, but came walking on the rough sea, whereby he expressed his wonderful power. It is the prerogative of God, that "he treads on the waves of the sea," whereby we are to understand that they are at his command. Here was God our Saviour, that did this in a literal sense, whereby he signified his dominion and sovereignty over the mighty waters. He could, with a word speaking, not only hush the boisterous waves of the sea, but make that fluid body as a pavement to his feet. Nothing short of infinite power was sufficient for this. He that turned the sea into dry land for his ransomed Israel to pass over, could with the same ease walk on the water as on the earth.

The disciples, beholding this strange appearance, were troubled, and cried out for fear, thinking it was a spirit. They had no thought, nor imagination, that their Lord was so near. Christ is nearer his people, than they are sometimes ready to think. He is present with them to behold all their fears, distresses, and dangers; and sometimes makes himself known to them

them in an unexpected hour. If he says to them, as here to his disciples, "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid," it is enough to silence all their complaints, and set their uneasy minds at rest. When our Lord had discovered himself to his disciples, Peter, who was naturally of a forward temper, immediately addressed himself to him, "Lord, if it be thou, or seeing it is thou, bid me come to thee on the water." This expressed his courage and confidence; but there was too much self-confidence in it. He was over and above hasty, for he might have staid till our Lord called him. We may learn from this, that we ought not to put ourselves on unnecessary trials, but wait till divine Providence calls us.

Our Lord, finding Peter very urgent to come to him on the water, therefore gives him the permission; he said to him, "Come." And thus the Lord does sometimes suffer us to follow our own strong inclinations, but not for our comfort, as it appears in the issue. It was either to try Peter's zeal and courage, or to make him sensible of his weakness and self-confidence, that our Lord called him. No sooner had he the word
from

from his Master's mouth, but he went down out of the ship. He did not throw himself in with a design to swim to him, but he walked on the water to go to Jesus, as if he was persuaded his Lord could enable him to it; and so he did, while Peter relied stedfastly on him for his preserving care. But when Peter looked more to the waves, than to Christ, when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid. Before he got out of the ship, he could not but know, what a mighty wind, and raging sea there were. But, it seems, he regarded not these difficulties, any more than others that came afterwards, when he said to our Lord, "I am ready to go with thee both into prison and to death;" words which express a greatness of zeal for Christ, but they were uttered with too great a dependence on his own strength; for the event shews, how dreadfully his resolutions failed. So here, when Peter looked to his danger more than to his deliverer, then fears overpowered him; and beginning to sink, he cried, like a man apprehensive of immediate death, "Lord, save me." Upon this Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him. He who is the Lord and Ruler of the
sea,

sea, was present to deliver him from sudden destruction. Peter let go his hand of faith, and therefore began to sink. But Christ exerted his arm of power, and thereby rescued him; but, at the same time, gave him this gentle, though instructive rebuke, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

We may remark here, what a lively representation this is of a convinced soul, who, in his application to Christ, sees himself in danger of destruction, and thereupon sets himself to pray for deliverance: and so compassionate and merciful a Saviour is the Lord Jesus, that he will not deny salvation to the soul, that sincerely and heartily cries to him for it. According to his promise, he will receive the heavy laden sinner that comes to him under an apprehension of guilt and wrath. "Him that comes to me, I will in nowise cast out." There is help in Christ at all times; immediate help, as Peter found in the time of his necessity and danger. He that knows all things, perfectly knew the state and situation of Peter's mind. He saw himself distrusted by him, for which he might have suffered him to sink, but his
bowels

bowels moved towards him, and his power was ready to help him. This great Redeemer now beholds what frame your soul is in. He sees whether you are senseless of your sinful state, and indifferent to him as a Saviour; or whether you behold yourself ready to perish, and are crying to him for deliverance. He knows whether the words he spoke to Peter are applicable to your case, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

From these words I shall make the following observations:

FIRST; There are different degrees of grace among the people of God.

SECONDLY, The same believer may one time be full of faith, at another full of fear.

THIRDLY; Unbelief is a great enemy to every gracious soul.

FOURTHLY; There may be true faith where there are many doubts.

K

FIFTHLY,

FIFTHLY, There is a specifical difference between an hypocrite's and a christian's faith.

SIXTHLY, A person may be a true believer without being perfect in grace.

LASTLY, Notwithstanding all the doubts of a believer, there is a sure foundation for his faith.

FIRST, There are different degrees of grace among the people of God.

In God's family his children are not all of the same size. They differ in their spiritual stature. Indeed, with respect to some things, there is no difference, no, not the least, between one and another. For instance, as to their justification. The same everlasting and glorious righteousness is to all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference. As there is none between the jew and the gentile, so neither between the weak and the strong believer. The hand of faith, though it may tremble, yet receives an whole Saviour; and it is on this account, that the weakest as much as the strongest

strongest christian is justified. If it was the act of faith that justified, then one might be justified more than another, but it is the *object*, the righteousness of Christ, which is invariable, and therefore there is no inequality in the privilege. Likewise are the children of God on a level as to their adoption. This privilege admits of no degrees: one of them has as good a right to all the blessings of the covenant, as another. They are equally heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Moreover, regenerating grace they are equally possessed of. One cannot be more born of God than another.

But as to their sanctification, here they differ. In this branch of salvation there are various degrees. "Abraham staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;" and the apostle tells us, that "against hope he believed in hope," in which lay the strength of his faith. Though darkness was all around him, and a death as it were on the promise, though great difficulties presented themselves to his view, yet they were all nothing to him, when he opened his eyes on the power of God.

Here his faith rested, "being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able to perform; and he accounted, that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead." Hence we may observe, that it is no such easy matter, as some think, to be persuaded of God's ability and power to perform his word.

What is said of faithful Abraham is far from being true of all his spiritual children; they are not all strong in faith. Peter had but little faith, at this time when our Lord spoke to him. The apostle John distinguishes believers into little children, young men, and fathers. Some are babes in Christ, babes in knowledge and faith; others are grown up to be men in Christ, and men in understanding. Some are but shrubs, while others are like cedars in God's garden; but as it is in the natural body, so in the mystical body of Christ, the "head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you."

SECONDLY, We may observe, that the same believer may at one time be full of faith, and at another, full of fear.

There

There are faintings of mind, and sins of infirmity, to which the highest believer on earth is liable. The strongest saint is not at all times alike in the frame and temper of his soul, any more than the stoutest man in the constitution and habit of his body. Grace has many imperfections: faith may fail in its lively exercise, and the soul that at one time is mounting up as on eagle's wings, at another time is scarce able to walk without fainting. God has promised the believer, that he shall not utterly faint; all his strength shall not depart from him, though sometimes it may seem as if he had none left. Abraham, though the father of all that believe, yet at times was full of fear, as it appears from what God said to him; "Fear not, Abraham." So when he denied his wife in Egypt, and again at Gerar, it was through a sinful fear of man, that he brought a snare upon himself; and this implied a distrustful fear of God. Jacob, who once wrestled with God, and prevailed, was at another time greatly afraid and distressed, especially when he said, "All these things are against me." David said in his heart, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul," notwithstanding God had so

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openly

openly promised him the kingdom ; and Peter himself, though at the time I am speaking of him, full of fear, and also when he followed his Lord afar off, and afterwards denied him in that astonishing manner, which was through fear and cowardice, yet at another time, how bold was he for his Lord and Master, in the presence of the jewish council ?

Some of God's children have known what it is to have their faith strongest in the time of affliction. When it has been tried, it has proved not only genuine, but strong. But alas ! in a time of prosperity, peace, and health, then the soul grows wanton, faith flags ; and, when a new difficulty appears, then fear is awake, and greatly disquiets the christian. It is well for the children of God, that their state does not alter as their frames do.

THIRDLY, We may observe what an enemy unbelief is to a gracious soul.

Every unconverted sinner is in a state of unbelief ; it is this sin that keeps him from closing with Christ now, and, if persisted in to the end,

end, will keep him out of heaven. "They could not enter in because of unbelief." Now where the Spirit of God is, who is styled the Spirit of faith, there unbelief is subdued and brought into captivity; but even there it is not rooted out. It is dethroned, but not destroyed. So far from that, that sometimes it works powerfully, as at other times deceitfully. When God has begun the good work in the soul, unbelief raises a thousand fears, whether ever it was begun or not. When he has given the strongest assurances, that it shall be carried on to perfection, unbelief excites many doubts whether this shall be: yea, after he has witnessed with the spirits of his people, that they stand in the near relation of children, and has given them the comfort of it, how ready is unbelief to question it all, and to call it delusion and fancy? As faith leads the soul to Christ for light, life, and comfort, so unbelief draws him back, and drives him into perplexity and darkness. As faith honours Christ more than other graces, so unbelief dishonours him more than other sins. You that are sensible of this sin, go to the Redeemer, and say, "Lord, help mine unbelief." It may be you are

not able to say, "Lord, I believe;" yet you can say, "I desire to believe." Let me tell you for your comfort, that if you would be helped against your unbelief, if you are seeking help from Christ, it is a good evidence, you have the reality of faith within you; for it is no less than faith, that can put you on going to Christ.

Unbelief is such an enemy, that it robs the believer of his peace and comfort; it raises storms and tempests in his soul; it hinders him in prayer, in meditation, and, more or less, in every duty. Unbelief magnifies dangers and difficulties, it greatly lessens the power, and depreciates, yea, despises the goodness of God. In a word, unbelief is such an enemy to the christian, that it contrives and seeks his ruin; but, blessed be God, it shall never accomplish it.

FOURTHLY, We may observe, there may be true faith, where there are many doubts.

Our Lord does not say to Peter, that because he doubted, therefore he had no faith; but he saw a little faith remaining amidst his
many

many doubts. Such then as assert, a person must have a full assurance, or else he has no faith, are not of our Lord's mind. Where was Peter's full assurance, when he began to sink, and was afraid, though his Lord was with him? He had faith of the right kind, faith of the operation of God, notwithstanding at this time his fears prevailed against him.

If faith is but as a grain of mustard-seed in the heart, the omniscient eye of the Redeemer perceives it, though it is covered over with earth and corruption. Not but that a full assurance is desirable and attainable. It is what many of God's children have experienced at one time, at least, in their lives. It is a mercy worth praying for and pressing after, though there seems little concern about it among the generality of christians. But if you think a comfortable assurance worth having, why are you so much at ease without it? Why do you neglect a strict search into your own soul, and a just comparing yourselves, and the word of God together? If you would have a comfortable assurance of a good work being begun in you, why are you so backward to prove and know yourselves?

elves? Why so seldom at the throne of grace? and when there, why so cold and formal? Why is not time set apart more frequently for solemn and delightful meditation on divine things? Why so seldom engaged in spiritual conversation? and when there is an opportunity for it, ah! how are the precious moments trifled away!

It is true, you can have no comfortable persuasion of your interest in Christ, unless the Holy Spirit shines on his own work, and disperses all your fears; but then there are means to be used on your part, and by these he generally works.

But to return. I say, there may be unfeigned faith, where there are many doubts. In every believer there is a mixture of light and darkness. He is made light in the Lord, and yet he sees through a glass darkly. "The eyes of his understanding are enlightened," and yet he knows but in part. There is a mixture of holiness and corruption within him, the flesh and the spirit striving against each other. There is a mixture of faith and fear. I do not
say,

say, fear is an inseparable companion of faith, except it be a godly fear, and that is not only consistent with the greatest comforts and highest assurance, but is always connected with such an happy frame. A child of God with a full assurance walks the more carefully and circumspectly before him, avoiding the occasions and appearances of sin, distrusting his own heart, at the same time, he is fully confiding and rejoicing in God his Saviour. There are multitudes, who never doubted all their days, of their being in a safe state; but who are they? In general, they are self-righteous souls, deceivers of themselves, who imagine they are something, when they are nothing but hypocrites before God. Certainly they are so, who, under such a persuasion, can give themselves liberty to sin. It would be matter of rejoicing to hear of such, that they begin to doubt of their state.

I deny not, but there may be here and there an instance of an eminently holy person, who goes on without any fear or doubt about his eternal state: and even at the time he feels sin bowing him down, he may be persuaded it is pardoned. But notwithstanding these uncommon

mon cases, there may be many doubts where there is true faith wrought in the heart, which faith in its principle shall never be lost, though, as I said before, the actings of it may abate, and when these abate, no wonder doubts and fears come pouring into the soul. But,

FIFTHLY, There is a specific difference between faith in an hypocrite, and faith in a true christian, or between temporary and saving faith.

A little faith in one child of God, is much more precious, than all the faith of all the hypocrites in the world; for they differ one from the other, not in degree, as some vainly imagine, but in kind. A counter may look like gold, but the metal is specifically different; and there may be that which looks like the faith of a child of God, but is not genuine. Simon Magus believed; but was his faith of the same nature with Simon Peter's? It is plain, it was not, for the apostle told him, his heart was not right in the sight of God. He believed, and at the same time was in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. Likewise we read of
some,

some, who “believed in Christ’s name, when
“they saw the miracles which he did.” But
though the expression is the same, as when
saving faith is described, yet this was no more
than a present conviction of his being the Mes-
siah, because they saw his miracles; for the
next verse says, “Jesus did not commit him-
“self to them,” and the reason is given, “be-
“cause he knew all men,” and consequently
knew, their hearts were not upright with him.
Also we read of the way-side hearers, that “the
“devil comes and takes away the word out of
“their hearts, lest they should believe and be
“saved;” and yet in the next verse, it is said of
the same sort of professors, under the character
of the stony ground hearers, that “when they
“hear the word, they receive it with joy, but
“having no root, for a while they believe, and
“in time of temptation fall away.” You find
all along, though they may be pleased and de-
lighted with what they hear, yea, though they
believe, yet it is only for a season; for when
the temptation comes, they fall away. But
what is the reason of their apostacy? Because
they have no root, no root of the matter in
them, or no work of grace begun in their
hearts;

hearts ; so that “ their joy is but the joy of the “ hypocrite,” and this temporary faith is but the faith of the hypocrite, as different from that my text speaks of, as heaven and earth. True faith, be it ever so weak, is the special gift of God ; and its being called the “ faith of God’s elect,” shews it to be of another nature to what an hypocrite may have. It is a faith peculiar to the chosen of God, given to them in pursuance of his choice, and shall end in eternal salvation. Yea, the faith of the weakest believer is connected with everlasting life, even in this world. “ He that believes on the Son “ hath everlasting life ;” he has the principle and earnest of it now ; he has it in his Head and Representative, and shall at last come to be fully possessed of it in his own person. These things plainly evidence, that there is a specifical difference between the faith of an hypocrite, and that of a saint.

SIXTHLY, We may learn from the text, that a person may be a true believer, without being perfect in grace.

Doubts

Doubts and fears argue the present to be a state of imperfection, that there is unbelief still in the hearts of Christ's true disciples, from which corrupt fountain they flow. Many things may indeed be the occasion of doubts and fears arising within the soul, but unbelief is the grand source and spring of them all. Satan may have a great hand in occasioning them; but if there was no unbelief within, all that he could do, would avail nothing. The world may sometimes be the means of stirring them up; the afflictions, disappointments, and trials of life, may, in this respect prove injurious to the soul, as, on the other hand, the smiles and affluence of the world may prove hurtful. Also, when God withdraws his comfortable influences, it may occasion many doubts to rise and prevail; but whatever be the occasion, unbelief gives birth to them all.

Surely then, one would wonder that any should be so senseless, as to dream of a state of perfection that may be attained in this mortal life; and yet this is the case with many; as if a person could not be a child of
God,

God, that does not perfectly resemble his heavenly Father.

Evident it is, that one may have true faith, or faith of a saving nature (and consequently be in a saved state), without being free from sin; for if he has any one doubt remaining, he cannot be said to be perfect in grace. The apostle tells us of the Thessalonians; that “their faith grew exceedingly;” nevertheless he prays; “that he might see their face, and might perfect what is lacking in their faith,” or that he might be instrumental of establishing them more and more. And where is the believer, who needs not his faith to be strengthened? Where is that person, that thinks he has faith enough? He that thinks so, gives evidence that he has none at all. If you have faith in you, instead of saying, you stand in need of nothing; you will go like humble supplicants to the throne of grace, and, with the apostles, say, “Lord increase our faith.” If you have faith in you, instead of being lifted up with a conceit of it, you will be humbled for your remaining unbelief. Though the life a believer
lives

lives in the flesh, is a life of faith on the Son of God, yet there will be all his days a mixture of distrust and unbelief.

Some of God's people indeed go out of the world, not only with "a good hope through grace," but with joy and triumph. But there are others, that shall land as safe at last, who fear and tremble at the approach of death; and, though their godly relatives have no doubt at all of their future happiness, yet they themselves may be doubting, till the messenger death has done his office; and then they are immediately filled with joy, in the presence of God and the Lamb for ever. But once more,

SEVENTHLY, Notwithstanding the many doubts of God's children, there is a sure foundation laid for their faith and trust.

When Peter's faith began to fail in the exercise of it, then he began to sink in the deep waters; but the foundation, on which his faith was built, did not fail. Jesus, his Saviour, was with him; he that was the Saviour of his soul from sin, was the Deliverer of his body from

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death.

death. This same Jesus, though he is now exalted in glory, beholds all the dangers his people meet; and when, to an eye of sense, they may be near sinking, he stretches forth the hand of his power, and saves them. Whether the danger be of the spiritual or temporal kind, he is present to work deliverance. And cannot some of us say, that "we have been delivered in six troubles, yea, in seven no evil has touched us?" If we were ignorant of a kind and watchful Providence to guard our outward man, we might well fear falling into many distresses, dangers, and death itself; and were there no security given to God's people, that their souls shall be preserved safe to his heavenly kingdom, they might well doubt their arrival at last. Let their eyes be open on the snares that are laid for them by their numerous adversaries, and let them consider their own weakness, and proneness to fall, and it might well fill them with servile fears, and anxiety of mind. But as a remedy to all this, let such consider, what a sure foundation God has laid, in his infinite wisdom and grace, for their safety and salvation. Was Jesus with Peter? So he is with you, "O ye of little faith."

Perhaps

Perhaps you may say with Gideon, "If the Lord is with us, why is all this evil befallen us?" If Christ is with us, why are we thus? So low, so afflicted, tempted, and deserted? But this is the language of unbelief; for he says to you: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God, I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Though he may not be with thee to comfort and rejoice thy soul, as once he was, yet he is with thee to uphold thy soul; so that though he may suffer thee to sink into doubts and fears, yet he will preserve thee from sinking into ruin and misery. You have the same Redeemer to cry to as Peter had, and "his ear is not heavy, that he cannot now hear." You have the arm of his power stretched out for your help and security, and that is never shortened, that it cannot save. Seeing there is such a sufficient foundation for your trust and confidence, you may therefore sing that song of the Lord, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore we will not fear." Whatever quarter your troubles arise from, do not forget your Almighty helper,

who has promised to be very gracious to thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee.

I shall close with this one direction,

Let not the doubting soul despair of help.

It is indeed a mercy to any one, when God brings him to despair of help from himself, or from his own works; but it is a sin to despair of help from above. Though you may see nothing but sin within you, and hell before you, and may think there is no mercy for you, yet be not afraid, but go and cast yourself at the feet of Jesus, acknowledging your guilty and wretched condition; and remember, he came into the world to save the chief of sinners. In him there is a salvation equal to your guilt and misery; and who knows but he may stretch forth the hand of his power, and rescue thy soul from condemnation! “O thou of little
“faith, wherefore then dost thou doubt?”

THE FALL OF PETER.

SERMON VI.

LUKE XXII. 61, 62.

*And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.
And Peter remembered the word of the Lord,
how he had said unto him, Before the cock
crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter
went out, and wept bitterly.*

IN the history which is given us of the sufferings of our blessed Redeemer, these are recorded, which he endured from the behaviour of his apostles towards him, particularly from two of them, Judas and Peter. It was not so great a wonder, that he was betrayed by Judas for thirty pieces of silver, for he was a worldly-minded wretch. But how astonishing, that he should in the most awful manner be denied by Peter, who appears throughout

the history, to be the most forward of the apostles, in shewing his regards to Christ! How very remarkable is it, that of twelve men, whom our Lord Jesus chose to be his immediate attendants, he should say concerning one of them, "He is a devil," and to another, "Get thee behind me, satan!" and yet what a wide difference was there between them! Judas hastened on the sufferings of his Master; Peter would at that time have prevented them. The devil entered into Judas, and filled his heart; while he came to Peter, and only as it were whispered in his ear.

Before I open to you the sin of Peter in denying his Lord, I shall consider some previous circumstances, which are recorded of him.

1. The intrepid spirit which he discovered in the garden, when his Master was apprehended.

The evangelist John relates, that "Simon
 " Peter, having a sword, drew it, and smote
 " the high priest's servant, and cut off his
 " right

“right ear; the servant’s name was Malchus.” Luke tells us, that the disciples had among them two swords, which some suppose, they brought with them from Galilee to defend themselves in their journey from robbers; and that others of them, beside Peter, said to Christ, “Lord, shall we smite with the sword?” Upon which Peter, who had one of them, being more bold than the rest, without waiting for an answer, drew it; and seeing one of the servants very violent in his attempts to seize Christ, he aimed at his head, and happened to cut off his right ear. What a zeal was here discovered for his blessed Master! Yet it was an over hasty and inconsiderate act, done in the heat of his spirit. A man may embark in a good cause, and at the same time expose it by his rashness and imprudence.

2. Observe, how soon the zeal and courage of the apostle cooled and abated.

The next account we have of Peter and the rest of his brethren is, that “they all forsook” their Master, “and fled.” When they saw, that he suffered himself to be bound by his

enemies, and was led away out of the garden like a malefactor, they all ran for safety, wherever they could, fearing, that they also should be taken, and punished as his adherents. “Per-
 “ haps,” says Dr. Doddridge, “ they were
 “ afraid, that the action of Peter should be
 “ imputed to them all, and might bring their
 “ lives into danger. But whatever they ap-
 “ prehended, their precipitate flight in these
 “ circumstances was the basest cowardice and
 “ ingratitude.” What became of Peter’s zeal
 now? How suddenly was the flame extin-
 guished!

Just in this manner do too many behave in the best of causes; soon hot, soon cold. The apostle Paul writing to the Galatians, says, “ I bear you record, that if it had been
 “ possible, ye would have plucked out your
 “ own eyes, and have given them to me.” Such was the ardent affection they had, when he first ministered to them. But mind what he says in the next verse. “ Am I therefore
 “ become your enemy, because I tell you the
 “ truth?” Upon which he adds, “ It is good
 “ to be zealously affected always in a good
 “ thing,

“ thing, and not only when I am present with “ you,” It is enough to make one’s heart sad, to see that among the professors of the present age, so many are grown very lukewarm and indifferent to the truths and institutions of Christ.

3. Let us see how Peter recovered his zeal, in some small measure, after his shameful flight.

In the 54th verse of the chapter where the text is, it is said, “ Then they took Jesus, and “ led him, and brought him into the high “ priest’s house.” He had undergone an examination before Annas, who sent him to Caiaphas, his successor as high priest, and his son-in-law. This took up a little share of time, during which Peter bethought himself, returned from his flight, and “ followed afar “ off.” By returning, and coming towards Christ, he shewed that he had still a love to him. Here was a little revival of his zeal. Yet his fears were such, as made him keep at a distance. He came to the outer gate of the high priest’s palace, and there stood, till the
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other disciple, most probably John, who went in first, came out, and spake to her who kept the door to let him in; which she did.

“He followed Christ afar off.” It may be taken as a description of some professors, who instead of “following the Lord fully,” follow him afar off. I mean; their obedience to his commandments is not universal, but partial. They attend upon some, but not upon all, the institutions of his worship. They make a religious profession, but have not completed it. Those words of Christ may be applied to such persons, which he addressed to some at Sardis; “I have not found thy works perfect before God.” It does not mean, that they had not attained a sinless perfection, but that they were habitually living in the omission of a commanded duty. By their following Christ, they discover some reverence and affection for him; but by following afar off, they shew a fear of being fully known to be his disciples. They cannot wholly forsake him, dare not wholly renounce him; yet by their hanging back, it is evident, that they have not that respect to his authority, which they ought to have.

have. Such persons are in greater danger of apostacy than others. Peter, who manifested so much intrepidity for his Master in the garden, ought to have appeared boldly for him in the court. Instead of that, the fear of man, which he now indulged, brought him into a dreadful snare. This gave rise to his shameful denial of his Lord.

In proceeding on the subject, I shall lay before you the nature of his sin. It was a very complicated evil.

FIRST, It began in cowardice.

He, who a few hours before said to his Lord, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended," was now full of fear and trembling. He uttered these big words in the confidence of his own heart. No doubt, he was sincere in his declaration, and meant what he said. But it is often the case, to go from one extreme to another. His trusting in his resolution made him lose his courage. He that in his own eyes was a bulwark against the world,
now

now the trial came, hung down his head like a bulrush. His self-confidence vanished into vapour and smoke. He that was bold as a lion, has presently become weak and timorous as a hare. It would have been well for him, when he made that solemn promise of adhering to Christ, had he said, "Lord, I have no power of my own; I trust therefore in thee for grace to keep me faithful." But he was so high minded, as to think himself superior to every temptation. Beware of cowardice.

SECONDLY, I would take notice of the motive, which induced Peter to enter into the palace of the high priest.

It is said, "He went into a feat with the servants *to see the end*;" what would be the issue of his Lord's trial, whether they would acquit or condemn him. At first sight this appears to be no bad motive. And, indeed, it was natural for him to endeavour to learn as soon as possible, what would become of his beloved Master. Yet the expression seems to carry in it a vain curiosity, as if he came there with no better a view, than a mere stranger would

would indulge. It is the remark of Mr. Henry, "he was led more by his curiosity than by his conscience; he attended as an idle spectator, rather than a disciple, a person concerned." I mention it for this reason, that an over-curious, prying temper, has been frequently the cause of sin, and the occasion of trouble.

THIRDLY, Peter was in great danger of falling, by going into the company of the wicked.

It is said, verse 55, that "when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them." The evangelist John tells us, that "the servants and officers," meaning the under-officers of the court, "stood there, who had made a fire of coals, for it was cold, and they warmed themselves; and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself." The little differences in the accounts given, are easily reconcileable. Peter, who seems to have gone into the hall only to warm himself at the fire, changed his posture; one while he stood, another time he sat down. Instead of
striving

striving to get into the court, where his Master was under examination, he tarried in the outer place, where the servants were assembled, and mixed with them. He affected disguise, as one ashamed to be thought a disciple. What could he expect to find there but bad company ?

A good person may sometimes be under the necessity of being in company with the vilest. Business, and other occasions, may require it. But it is one thing to be in the company of the wicked ; another, to be a companion of them. Lot was in Sodom ; but his righteous soul was vexed with their filthy conversation. Peter in the hall, in all probability, heard and saw much wickedness going forward, and this proved a temptation to him. The psalmist having observed, that “ the Israelites were mingled among the heathen,” adds, “ they learned their works, and served their idols ; which were a snare unto them.” Let all, and especially, let the young beware of evil company. The wicked will entice you to do those things which are base and dishonourable, to drink, to break the sabbath, to go into houses of ill fame, and perhaps, to profane the
name

name of God. But what says the word of God? "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men; if the lips of a strange woman drop as an honey-comb, her feet go down to death, and her steps take hold on hell." David says, "I have not sat with vain persons; I have hated the congregation of evil-doers;" and then adds, "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men." Thousands have been ruined in their good name, their substance, their bodies, and their souls, by associating with the wicked.

Some beginners in the world, in hopes of enlarging their business, have made it their practice to resort to nightly clubs with those, whose conversation is very ensnaring. And as sin is of a hardening nature, the profanation of sacred things, which at first startled them, soon becomes familiar; the devil stands ready to lead them on to add sin to sin, and corrupt nature, like tinder, catches the sparks as they fall. It is highly probable, that Peter on hearing the vilest language, soon caught the infection.

FOURTHLY,

FOURTHLY, One of the sins of Peter was lying.

He uttered that which he knew in his conscience was false, with a design to deceive. When he was asked, as soon as he came into the hall, by the damsel who kept the door, “Art not thou one of this man’s disciples?” “He immediately said, I am not. After a little while, another said to him, Thou art one of them, for thy speech bewrayeth thee; thou art of Galilee, for thou speakest that dialect. And he said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. Then another said to him, Did I not see thee in the garden with him? This also he denied.”

Though Peter was at this time under the power of fear, he cannot be excused. He knew, that he was one of the disciples of Jesus. He knew, that he was in the garden with him. What was his design then by denying it, but to deceive? And not only was it a sin against man, but an heinous offence in the sight of God, who has forbidden lying, and who declares

declares, that he hates it, and will surely punish it.

This is one of the atrocious crimes, which abound in our land, among men of high and low degree. It runs less or more, through every department, every occupation, every connection. And though one who fears God, and regards man, may be overtaken by this fault, or surpris'd into it by temptation, yet from his inmost soul he can say with the psalmist, "I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I love."

FIFTHLY, Consider Peter's open denial of his Lord; and that at the time when it was his duty, more abundantly, to have stood up for him, and confess'd him.

He had made a noble confession of him not long before, saying, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Yet now he says, "I know not the man." It would have been criminal to be silent. But in so positive and direct a manner to disown his Lord, was in effect to say, "He is an impostor, and let

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him

“him be punished as such.” Yet it should be observed, that this denial of Christ did not spring from enmity and malice against his Lord, but from the fear of man. Once more,

SIXTHLY, Consider Peter’s denial of Christ, as it was attended with cursing and swearing.

“He began to curse and to swear.” In cursing, he imprecated divine vengeance on his head; in swearing, he called God to witness, that what he uttered was truth; at the same time he knew it to be a falsehood. We sometimes call such language, the language of hell. But properly speaking, the wicked in that place of torment are far from wishing an increase of their punishment, nor do they appeal to God. Profane swearing is indeed the language of thousands, who are in the high road to destruction.

To this shocking degree Peter sinned. Yet it must be said of him, he did not love cursing, nor was it his custom to take the name of the Lord in vain. Nevertheless, his sin was attended with very heinous aggravations. It
was

was committed against light, and knowledge, and the convictions of his conscience. He sinned against his Lord, who had shewn him peculiar favour. His transgression was committed, after he had in the most solemn manner vowed and protested, that he would not deny him. Warning was given him; yet he regarded it not. His sin was repeated the third time. And some observe, as aggravations of his crime, the weakness of the temptation, and that it was committed soon after he had received from the hands of Christ the symbols of his body and blood, as broken and shed for the remission of his sins.

Thus did an eminent apostle of Christ fall from his integrity. Concerning his repentance, I propose, God willing, to treat in another discourse, and shall close at present by making an improvement of what you have heard.

1. See the impartiality of the sacred writers in recording the gross failings of good men.

Even those, who had attained to very high measures of faith and holiness, fell by enormous transgressions. Abraham himself, the father of all that believe, was more than once chargeable with falsehood. David, the man after God's own heart, how deep was his fall! Without enumerating more instances, the recording of these sad accounts in the book of God, is a proof of the impartiality of it.

2. Concerning Peter, let it be observed, that as his apostacy was not final, so neither was it total.

It is true, there was not the least appearance in him at this time, of that which was good, but of every thing that was evil. Yet even then, he did not lose the grace of God; it was like a spark covered with ashes. Our Lord said to him just before, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." The original word signifies, that thy faith be not eclipsed. - It was indeed a partial, but not a total eclipse. His faith failed in the fruit of it, but not in the principle of it.

3. The

3. The sin of Peter is set before us for our admonition, for our warning, not as our warrant.

They must be wicked above measure indeed, who take occasion from his fall to transgress. O, my friends, we are hereby taught, that it is not in man that walks to direct his steps. The best of men, what are they, if God leave them to themselves for an hour? The next temptation which presents itself would carry them away. Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. Be not high minded, but fear. A fear of caution ought ever to be cherished; for wherever we go, snares are laid for us, and our hearts are prone to sin. Beware of "following a multitude to do evil. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Exercise a godly sorrow over a deceitful heart. Many have sinned with Peter, who have not repented with him. As we see in Judas, that a professor may make a great shew, and yet be an ungodly person, so in Peter, how low a professor may fall, and still be a true believer. Nevertheless, we cannot be too much on our

guard, nor give ourselves too much to prayer, that the Lord would be our keeper. When we hear of the failings of those, who are accounted good men, that is the time, to commit ourselves in a solemn manner to the custody of divine power and grace.

LASTLY, If any of you are conscious to yourselves of great and open iniquity, go and humble yourselves before the Lord. Make a particular and an ingenuous confession. At the same time, look and rely upon that precious blood of the Son of God, which made atonement for the chief of sinners, and which cleanses from all sin. "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord, and say unto him, "Take away all iniquity from us, and receive us graciously; so will we render the fruit of our lips."

THE REPENTANCE OF PETER.

SERMON VII.

LUKE XXII. 61, 62.

*And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter,
And Peter remembered the word of the Lord,
how he had said unto him, Before the cock
crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter
went out and wept bitterly.*

IN a former discourse, I treated on the shameful conduct of Peter in denying his Lord. The set time being come for Christ to suffer, his enemies apprehended and bound him in the garden, and led him to the high-priest. While he was under examination, Peter, who first followed him afar off, came into the hall, and sat down with the servants, waiting to see the issue of the trial. There it was he denied the Lord with oaths and curses,

no less than three times. I have opened to you the nature of his sin, with the aggravations of it, and then made an improvement, so far, of the subject.

According to proposal, I shall now take into consideration his repentance.

It is observable, that the four evangelists have recorded his transgression; but they have not all recorded his repentance. John, who wrote his gospel the last, verbally omits it. Yet he has given such an account of Peter, after the resurrection of Christ, as amounts to a proof, that he was a true penitent. And, indeed, it were sufficient to our belief, if only one inspired penman had declared it. But in the mouth of three credible witnesses the thing is established.

Let us look into the narrations which they have given us. Matthew says, “ Peter remembered the words which Jesus said to him, “ Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me “ thrice; and he went out, and wept bitterly.” Mark says, “ The second time the
“ cock

“ cock crew, (which was about three o'clock
“ in the morning), and Peter called to mind
“ the word that Jesus said to him, Before the
“ cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.
“ And when he thought thereon, he wept.”

The word which is rendered *he thought thereon*, it differently rendered by critics. Some say it should be rendered *he covered*, viz. his head with his mantle; for the covering of the face was usual in the time of mourning. Others again, that *he rushed out*, viz. of the high-priest's hall, and then wept. Other interpretations are put on the word. But, after all, our translation may have the preference: When the evangelist Luke relates the fact, he tells us a particular circumstance, about which the other evangelists are silent. “ The Lord turned and looked
“ upon Peter. And Peter remembered the
“ word of the Lord, how he said to him, Be-
“ fore the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny
“ me thrice. And he went out, and wept
“ bitterly.” Observe here,

FIRST, The sincerity and suddenness of Peter's repentance.

SECONDLY,

SECONDLY, The incident which brought his iniquity to remembrance, which was the crowing of the cock.

THIRDLY, The pungency of his repentance. And,

FOURTHLY, The principal cause, which was the look that the Lord gave him.

FIRST, The sincerity and suddenness of Peter's repentance.

Although none of us doubt of these things, it is necessary to speak of them to the glory of free grace, and that we always have them in remembrance. If any of Peter's fellow disciples had heard him deny their Lord, in that shocking manner which has been related, what would they have thought of him? Surely this man must have been all along a wolf in sheep's clothing. We were deceived in him. And, even supposing they had been eye-witnesses of his tears; yet would they not have been ready to suspect him, as the disciples did Saul of Tarsus? Concerning him
it

it is said, "When he assayed to join himself
"to them, they were all afraid of him, and
"believed not that he was a disciple." Be
this as it may,

1. We have the strongest evidence of the
sincerity of his repentance.

And so had all his brethren: otherwise they
would not have re-admitted him into their
fellowship. If any of you, my friends, who
fear God, were to see a fellow professor, a fel-
low member, fall into scandalous sins, after
the similitude of Peter's transgression, or into
any other atrocious crime, and were to
hear him express his sorrow with tears for
what he has done; notwithstanding this, you
would not think it right to restore him to fa-
vour and fellowship, until "he brought forth
"fruits meet for repentance." Certainly this
should be the term of friendship and com-
munion.

To what place Peter retired, when he went
mourning out of the high-priest's hall, during
the space of three days, we are not informed.

But,

But, in all probability, he speedily found out his fellow disciples, and gave them such testimonies of his repentance, as that they accounted him a genuine and humble penitent. For, the third day after his fall, which was the first day of the week, the day of Christ's resurrection, we read, that upon Mary Magdalen's informing Peter and John, that the Lord's body was not in the sepulchre, they both immediately ran thither, to see whether it were so or not. It is also recorded, that the angel, whom the women saw in the sepulchre, said to them, "Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter, that he goes before you into Galilee." The mention of Peter's name so expressly by the heavenly messenger, could not but give him strong consolation, upon his hearing of it, and is a demonstration, that his repentance was certainly of the right kind. Thus "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Moreover, let it be observed concerning this apostle, that when our Lord predicted his apostacy, he also made mention of his recovery. Thus, in verse 32, of this chapter, he says, "And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

He

He does not say, When thou shalt convert thyself, but when thou “art converted.” Sin is a departure from the living God. Repentance is a return to him. In a godly man it is a new conversion. The good Shepherd restores his wandering soul. By the exhortation which our Lord gives Peter, we may justly think, that when he found out his brethren, all of whom had forsaken their Master, and fled, he not only declared his own repentance, but was of signal service and use, as an instrument of confirming them in their love and adherence to their dear Lord.

I farther remark, under this head, what a mighty difference there was between the repentance of Peter, and that of Judas. For it is said of the traitor, that he “repented himself,” and made a public confession before the jewish council, that “he had sinned in betraying innocent blood.” But notwithstanding he changed his mind, and was sorry for his sin, it was not that godly sorrow, which worketh salvation, but the sorrow of the world, which worketh death. His conscience stung
him;

him ; he could not bear the agonizing reflections of his own mind ; and being filled with horror and despair, and thoughtless of eternity, he plunged into it. On the other hand, Peter, when brought to a sense of his complicated crime, was ashamed and confounded, because he had offended, displeased, and dishonoured his Lord. He mourned over his vile ingratitude to his best friend and benefactor, and returned to him, from whom he had revolted ; whereby he expressed his genuine and ardent affection to him.

2. Let us now see the suddenness of Peter's repentance.

It seems to me, that he was about two or three hours in the high-priest's hall. The first time he was charged with being a disciple, he denied it. Upon this, he went out into the porch, and soon returned. A little while after, he denied the second charge, and supported his denial with an oath. Then about the space of an hour after, upon the third charge he denied it, pouring out oaths and imprecations.

Upon

Upon this, his sin was brought to mind ; his sorrow was kindled within him, and he went out a real penitent.

I mention it, not only to shew what a wonderful change was wrought in him in a little time, for nothing is too hard for the Lord, but also to point out the sovereignty of the grace of God in his dealings with different believers. Some have been suffered to continue under the power of their iniquities a long while, compared with others. At least, they have remained in a stupid frame, before they were awakened to repentance. This was the case with David, whose guilt lay upon his conscience unrepented of, as it is commonly thought, nine months ; and he was not brought to himself, until God sent the prophet Nathan to him. We may apply that passage to the time, where he says, “ When I kept silence,” when I did not make an ingenuous confession of my sins to God, “ my bones waxed old “ through my roaring all the day.” The sensations of the divine wrath, and the horrors of his conscience, affected the health of his body. But in the case of Peter we see, that he was
quickly

quickly renewed to repentance, and in a little time after, was sent and employed, to preach the doctrine of repentance and forgiveness in Christ's name to his countrymen, and honoured as the instrument of converting thousands.

I now proceed,

SECONDLY, To point out the incident, which brought Peter's iniquity to remembrance.

All the evangelists recite the warning which our Lord gave him, and mention the crowing of the cock. Only Mark speaks of his crowing twice. The first time was at Peter's first denial of Christ. He no sooner said, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest, than he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. It looks as if his going out at this time, indicated the hurry and confusion of his mind. But whether his now hearing the crowing of the cock brought to him any sense of his sin, does not appear. He might be in a great perturbation, when accused of being a disciple of Jesus, who was now upon his trial,
and

and yet destitute of the lowest degree of true repentance. He had fallen into a heinous transgression, which immediately blinded his mind, and rendered him quite inattentive to the admonition given him by the crowing of the cock the first time. But when he had a third time denied his Lord with oaths and curses, the cock crew a second time. Then it was, this circumstance was made of special use to him; for it reminded him of his Lord's prediction, which had been uttered but a few hours before. He then remembered the word, which the Lord had spoken to him; "Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice."

Though great events are sometimes brought about by inconsiderable means, we are not to think, that this small incident was a cause of the apostle's repentance. Yet it so falls out in the course of divine Providence, that an apparently little circumstance, which turns up before us, shall prove the occasion of bringing to mind our past transgression. And if nothing of this kind happen, yet, as Mr. Henry observes, "Conscience should be to us as the

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"crowing

“ crowing of the cock, to put us in mind of
 “ what is forgotten.” I am sure, that this
 power of the soul has a voice, and sometimes
 a mighty voice. It speaks within us as God’s
 vicegerent once, yea, twice; and miserable is
 that person who perceives it not: deplorably
 wicked is he, who attempts to stifle it by the
 pleasures of sin. I pass on,

THIRDLY, To open the pungency of Pe-
 ter’s repentance.

When Mark relates the fact, he says no
 more than this; “ he wept.” It has been
 said, that this evangelist wrote his gospel by
 the direction of the apostle Peter, and therefore
 records his sin in as strong a light as possible,
 but speaks very sparingly of his repentance.
 However this may be, it is certain, that the
 other evangelists say, “ he wept bitterly.” No
 sooner was he convinced of the great evil he
 had done, in disowning and dishonouring his
 Lord, than his heart became broken and con-
 trite. “ He went out, and wept bitterly.”
 Observe,

1. As a real penitent, he went out from his evil companions:

They who have associated with the wicked; when repentance is granted, will partake no longer with them in their evil deeds. Peter found by sad experience, that it cost him dear, to mingle with such companions, not because they were men of low degree; it was not his pride, that broke off their acquaintance; but because they were abandoned, and lost to all that is good. They had proved a terrible snare to his soul; and if he had expressed before them his sorrow and grief for what he had done, they would have made him the object of their ridicule.

O my young friends, take heed, and beware of your company. If you delight to associate with the wicked in this life, what can you expect, but to have your portion with them in torments hereafter? David says, “I am a companion of all them that fear the Lord, and keep his commandments.” Through temptation, Peter the apostle was among an infernal crew. But no sooner was

he made sensible of his sin and danger, than he forsook them, and retired to some obscure corner to mourn and lament. For,

2. So deep and pungent was his repentance, that he poured forth a flood of tears.

It was not a superficial sorrow, like that which is found in some, when for their transgressions they have smarted. The effects of a debauched and extravagant life, have brought many to such a repentance. But it was sin, sin itself, which appeared to the repenting apostle to be exceedingly sinful. That he had offended against his dear Master, denied so great and gracious a Lord in so heinous a manner, wounded him to the quick. "What have I done," he thought within himself, "in thus abusing his kindness and love! How provoking, how aggravated the crime, that I have committed!" His heart dissolved; he melted into tears; "his eyes trickled down, and ceased not, without any intermission."

We are not to make the shedding of tears for sin, an infallible sign of evangelical repentance.

ance. Much depends upon bodily constitution. But when persons can pour them forth in plenty, on account of worldly losses, and not at all because of their transgressions; let them express ever so much indignation against sin, they are destitute of godly sorrow for it. We are not to suppose, that the tide of sorrow was always so high in Peter, as it now was; yet he was ever after a true penitent, a vigilant believer. He not only walked softly, but he walked humbly. It is an expression of archbishop Leighton, "Those streams usually run
" deepest, where they are stillest, and most
" quietly conveyed. Tears that flow from
" love to God, and grief for sin, have neither
" uncommonness nor excess in them. Abun-
" dance of them well beseeem any man that is
" a christian." I proceed to observe.

FOURTHLY, The real cause of Peter's repentance, as it is here related.

" The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." He who was brought to the bar, and tried as a malefactor, was the Lord himself; the Lord of all, yet now in disguise; the Sun

of Righteousness under a cloud. It is said of him, "he turned." Hitherto his face had been towards the high-priest, and the rest of the judges on the bench. But now he turned towards Peter, who was in that part of the hall, which was beneath. It implies, that he heard the whole process of Peter's denial of him, with his oaths and curses. And just at the same moment, in which the Lord looked upon him, it was so ordered by his Providence, that Peter should cast his eyes upon his Master. Let us consider, what kind of a look it was, which Jesus gave him. By the effect which it produced, it is evident, that it was not a common look, but one that was very extraordinary.

1. It was a majestic and commanding look.

It was the look of a sovereign upon a subject, which inspires awe and reverence. It was the Lord himself, who beheld him. Peter then possessed a sense of the dignity of the person whom he had offended.

2. It was a frowning look.

He who before looked on his servant with delight, now had terror in his countenance, and beheld him with holy anger. It was a look, which said, "Peter, thou hast grievously
"offended and displeased me. I gave thee
"warning of thy perfidy; but did I ever give
"thee cause to deny me? Thou knowest
"that I did not."

3. It was a compaffionate look.

There was pity in his eye; for he knew, that Peter still loved him; and that it was the fear of man, which brought him into the snare.

4. It was a penetrating look.

It went to his heart; and he was immediately convinced, that his Lord knew all that he had said, and all that he had done. And once more,

5. It was an efficacious look.

It carried power with it, to fill his soul with a repentance, not to be repented of. It not

only brought to mind the admonition, which had been given him, but effected a most marvellous change. We may now say, that Peter turned in a spiritual sense, and looked on the Lord, whom he had pierced by his sin, and mourned for it.

I shall close with an improvement of the subject.

1. In general, we are taught, that there is mercy with the Lord for the most heinous offenders on their repentance.

Observe, I say, *on* their repentance, not *for* it. "Peter's bitter weeping, and his quick repentance, after Christ looked upon him," says a learned commentator, "*made atonement for his sin.*" On the contrary, the scripture informs us, that nothing less than the blood of Christ atones for sin. If our heads were waters, and our eyes fountains of tears, not a sinful thought could they wash away. Yet without repentance, pardoning mercy is in vain expected. Be it so, that thou hast not sinned, as Peter sinned; nevertheless, if the
sins,

fin, with which thou art chargeable, of heart, lip, and life, be brought to remembrance, thou wilt see thyself to be an odious transgressor. Yea, if any one iniquity, suppose it be pride, unbelief, profane language, lying, drunkenness, uncleanness, let the sin be what it will; if it be beheld by thee as a transgression of the law in the sight of God, it will make thee cry out, “Woe is me, for I am undone! God be
“merciful to me a sinner. Let the wicked
“forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man
“his thoughts; and let him return to the
“Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and
“to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

2. It is easy to sin; but it is hard to repent.

Many have compared the former to a going down hill, the latter to a going up hill. In Peter we may see, that the commission of one sin led to another. O then take heed of the beginnings of transgression. “When lust hath
“conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin,
“when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” They who trust to a death-bed repentance, are guilty of egregious folly. How know you,
but

but you may die, as suddenly as others have done? One and another of you have been raised from the gates of the grave. In what light did sin and repentance appear to you, when you thought you were going into an awful eternity? Now you have more sins to repent of than ever. Yet let it be remembered, that you cannot repent of one by your own power. Therefore,

3. Earnestly pray, that the Lord would give you such a merciful look, as to fill your souls with godly sorrow, and to attract your hearts to him.

As the very best of us have sins enough to condemn us, there is continual reason for holy mourning. Let us beseech the Lord then, that he would look unto us, and cause his face to shine upon us. I shall close with this one remark. If you are looking to him for repentance and forgiveness of sins, as the fruit of the Redeemer's death and intercession, it is a token for good, that he looks on you, and is merciful unto you, as he is to them that love his name.

THE WEDDING GARMENT.

S E R M O N VIII.

MATTHEW XXII. 11.

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment.

THE parables, which our blessed Lord delivered in the course of his ministry, convey to us useful and important instruction. Under the similitudes he used, which are borrowed from the customs of the eastern country, the noblest realities are represented. In the preceding verses, the dispensation of the gospel, called “the kingdom of heaven,” is said to be “like a certain king, who made a marriage for his son.” The meaning is, that God, in pursuance of sending his Son into
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the world, has made abundant provision for the souls of sinners, and graciously proposed him to our acceptance; that whosoever believes in him, or consents unfeignedly to yield himself unto him, shall partake of those spiritual blessings, which are described by this nuptial feast. The jews had the first overtures made to them. They were called one time after another; but they refused, and made light of the invitation. Yea, they treated the servants of God spitefully, and slew them. Hereupon the measure of their iniquity was filled up; and God appointed, that the Roman army should come and destroy their place and nation. The jews being rejected for their infidelity, the Lord was pleased, in his adorable mercy, to send the gospel to sinners of the gentiles, who are said to be in the highway; not in such an enclosure as the jews were in, but scattered through the wide world. Accordingly, the apostles and others, who bore the commission of heaven, made the offer of salvation to them. They promiscuously preached the gospel to persons of every country, and every character; the consequence of which was, multitudes were gathered together, and
formed

formed into a visible church. Some were real converts; others were no better than hypocrites in heart. Thus, as it is said in the verse before the text, "The wedding was furnished with guests." A great multitude took on them the christian name. "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man, who had not on a wedding garment." He was not dressed in a manner agreeable to such a solemnity. Some commentators* have observed, that in those ancient times, in the wardrobes of great men there were festival garments provided, and offered to all those that were invited; and that in the present case we must conclude, not only from the magnificence of the preparations, to which we must suppose the wardrobe of the prince corresponded, but likewise from the following circumstance of resentment against this guest, that a robe was offered to him, but was refused. However, we hereby learn, that the great God narrowly observes, among all those that name the name of Christ, who are real christians, and who are not.

* Hammond, Doddridge, &c.

Before I enter on this part of the parable, I shall lay before you a few remarks on the context.

1. We cannot sufficiently admire the goodness and grace of God, in making suitable provision for the souls of men.

The soul has need of food equally with the body. And as the food is spiritual in its nature, nothing less than that which is adequate to its necessities, can afford true satisfaction. Multitudes indeed content themselves with nothing higher than sensual enjoyments. Give them the world; and it is all they wish. Nevertheless, in the fulness of their imagined sufficiency, their souls are in the deepest straits. The feast here mentioned is not the preparation of man, but the provision of God; which only can fill an immortal spirit. It is represented in the parable by the dainties of a well spread table. "Behold I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come to the marriage." By these emblems, the benefits of
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the everlasting covenant are held out; such as forgiveness of sin, the adoption of children, renewing grace, communion with God, and the enjoyment of him. O what admiration and thankfulness are required, that the most high and holy God, whose anger we have provoked and deserved, should condescend to provide so suitably and liberally, for unworthy, indigent, guilty sinners.

2. By the ministration of the gospel, this spiritual provision is brought to our knowledge, and proposed to our acceptance.

The gospel, which answers to its name, brings glad tidings of good things. It reveals a Saviour, Jesus Christ the Lord; and informs us, that in him there is a fulness, which is proportionate to the necessities of perishing sinners, who are the persons invited to come and partake of it. “Wherefore do ye spend your
“ money for that which is not bread, and
“ your labour for that which satisfieth not?
“ Harken diligently unto me,” says the blessed God, “and eat ye that which is good, and let
“ your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline
“ your

“ your ear, and come unto me: hear, and
 “ your soul shall live.” How endearing is the
 call, how moving is the language, which the
 Lord uses. Whoever be the messengers, the
 message is the same. And to them he says,
 “ He that heareth you, heareth me; and he
 “ that despiseth you, despiseth me.” Accord-
 ing to the parable, there was a succession of
 them. One was appointed after another to
 go on the like errand; and they readily went
 at their Master’s call. What cause have we to
 bless God for the continuance of the gospel
 ministry, and that to us the invitation is given,
 the word of salvation is sent.

3. Notwithstanding the gracious proposals
 of the gospel, there are many who reject the
 salvation which is offered.

We are told in the 3d verse, that “ they
 “ who were bidden, would not come;” and in
 the 5th, that “ they made light of it.” It is the
 same word which is used in another place;
 “ How shall we escape, if we *neglect* so great sal-
 “ vation?” They cast a slight on the message
 and the messenger, and valued earthly things
 before

before the blessings of salvation. "They went
"their way, one to his farm, another to his
"merchandise;" each respectively to his own
occupation. They are blamed, not for attend-
ing to their proper calling, but for giving the
preference to the world. Being possessed of a
carnal mind, they had no room to entertain
Christ, and the realities of the gospel. And is
not this the temper and conduct of many pro-
fessors at this day, as it was heretofore with
the unbelieving jews; that they made light
of the invitations and blessings of the cove-
nant of grace? You, my friends, may attend
on the preaching of the gospel, and yet may
undervalue it in your hearts. Though you
hear of Christ, you may secretly despise him.
But know, that in so doing, you bring ruin
upon your own souls. "There is salvation in
"no other." Whatever you disregard, be-
ware of neglecting your spiritual and eternal
welfare. If you make light of Christ now,
he will make light of you in the great day.
Again,

4. The gospel-church, in its visible state,
comprehends persons of very different charac-

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ters.

ters. It is said, that "the servants," or ministers of Christ "gathered together all as "many as they found, both bad and good." Some suppose, that this difference of character subsisted, before the gentiles were invited to partake of the sacred feast, that some of them were good, that is, sober and well inclined, whilst others were addicted to gross abominations. But I rather consider this description, as inclusive of the gentiles, after they were outwardly called, and had made a profession of christianity. To some the word was made effectual by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that they received it, as the Thessalonians did, not as the word of men, but as it was in truth, the word of God. These were good in heart. Others associated with them, and externally resembled them; but inwardly they were strangers to godliness; there was a present reformation, but no inward principle of grace. The gospel is to be preached to every creature under heaven. Its offers are universal. "Who-
"soever will, let him come, and take the wa-
"ter of life freely." There is encouragement for persons of every class and condition to apply for life and salvation. In the visible church,

or among the professors of the christian faith, "a mixed multitude" is found. Our Lord has delivered parables wherein this fact is illustrated; that of the tares and the wheat, which sprang up in the same field; and that of "the net, which was cast into the sea, and "gathered of every kind; which when it was "full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and "gathered the good into vessels, but cast the "bad away." While the net is filling, or while the preaching of the gospel is continued to a people, many are included in the visible church, some of whom have only "the form "of godliness," while others know by experience "the power of it."

When a great multitude of guests came to the marriage feast, it is said, "the king came "in to see them, and there he beheld a man, "who had not on a wedding garment;" upon which he was expostulated with; and having nothing to say, by way of defence or excuse, he was cast out as an unprofitable servant. Now this nuptial feast, in its primary sense, as I said, means the gracious provision, which God has made for the souls of men. It may

be accommodated to the ordinance of the Lord's supper. They who are admitted to this peculiar institution, ought, in the judgment of charity, to be true christians; because it was appointed, not for conversion, but for edification, or as the means of strengthening the faith and love of those who believe through grace. In this, as well as in other things, man can only look to the outward appearance. The servants of Christ may be imposed on. Ministers and others may be deceived by plausible pretences. The apostles themselves had not always the gift of discerning spirits; otherwise they would not have received to baptism and communion Ananias and Sapphira, and him who is usually called Simon Magus, Simon the magician. But the great King, the Lord of Hosts, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, perfectly knows every thought of the heart. He distinguishes between them who have only a visible profession, and those who possess godly sincerity.

I shall not, however, confine my thoughts to a qualification for the Lord's table. But as the wedding garment is necessary for all who
now

now appear before God, and for them who shall enter in unto the marriage supper of the Lamb, or who shall be made partakers of the felicity of the heavenly world, I shall speak more at large.

FIRST, Observe; here is implied a solemn caution against a religious disguise.

Diffimulation in human transactions, between man and man, is odious. And such is the depravity of human nature, that it is found less or more in every class of mankind. Solomon tells us of some, who utter words of kindness, and are fair spoken in their invitations to a feast; at the same time they entertain an inward grudge. "As he thinketh in his heart, "so is he; eat and drink, saith he, but his "heart is not with thee." In transacting secular affairs, there are persons, who pretend friendship to those whom they are endeavouring secretly to undermine. There are also hypocrites in the state, who under colour of serving their country, aim at nothing higher, than advancing and enriching themselves. But the

worst of all hypocrites, are those that are found in the visible church. In the church of Israel there were "false prophets, who wore a rough garment," the prophets garb, "to deceive." And under the gospel, we read of false "apostles, who were deceitful workers." But those whom I chiefly intend are persons, who not only impose on their fellow worshippers, but deceive themselves, in thinking that they are real christians, when indeed they are christians only in name. The apostle tells us of some, who creep into houses, in hope of secular advantage. So there are some, who creep into churches, as the man came to the nuptial feast, without a wedding garment. They imagine themselves as good as any of the guests; they pretend to religion, but they are destitute of it. We read of the deceitfulness of sin. And they who know their own hearts, know that they are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Many take it for granted, that they are real christians, because they are found in the faith, attend on the worship of God, and are sober in their life. These things are good in themselves. But there may be all this,

this,

this, and yet the heart may not be right in the sight of God.

By the king coming in to see the guests, we are to understand, that the eye of God is in a special manner upon those who associate for religious worship, and make a profession of his name. He is not in any respect a mere spectator. Certainly then, he is not so in matters which appertain to his house and worship. "All the churches shall know, that it is he who searches the reins and the heart." Fellow-worshippers may be deceived; but disguises, or mere appearances, are nothing to him, whose understanding is infinite. We are in reality no other than what we are before the great Omniscient. He discerns between the hypocrite and the sincere; between him that comes with a presumptuous hope, and him that comes with a contrite and humble spirit. He narrowly inspects, as an impartial judge, every one that attends his house, and approaches his table; what are their true state and disposition, their motives and views. O that these thoughts were realized by every one of us; it

would be a guard upon our souls against trifling with God. Let us consider ourselves as in his more immediate presence. And if this consideration has its proper influence upon us, it will be an effectual mean to deter us from hypocrisy. For how can that person's "heart go after his covetousness," who is fully persuaded, that the eye of the all-seeing God is upon him! If we are to "keep our foot when we go to the house of God," surely we should be watchful over ourselves when we are in his house; and as Solomon expresses it, "we should be more ready to hear, than to offer the sacrifice of fools." Such a sacrifice is that which is offered, when the heart is absent. God is to be "glorified in our bodies, and in our spirits." But do they glorify him, who are pleasing themselves with thoughts foreign from the great concern, in which they are apparently engaged? And what concern is so great, as that which we have with the most high God, when singing his praises, speaking to him in prayer, or hearing him speak to us in the ministry of his word, or when we are communicating at his table? O
let

let the world be put far from us in such sacred business as this. The apostle Peter has given us a rule for our behaviour, if we would receive benefit from the word and ordinances of God; and that is, “to lay aside all malice and
“all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all
“evil speaking.” Not only are those things to be cast off, which tend to injure man; but also all dissimulation towards God. The allusion is to throwing off a garment, that is unfit to be worn, casting our filthy rags away with indignation, as that which would defile us, instead of which we are to put on that garment, which God has provided and required. This leads me,

SECONDLY, To consider what it is, that constitutes the wedding garment, which it becomes us to wear in the presence of the King, the Lord of Hosts.

There is a beauty in the similitudes which are used in the scriptures; and hereby God is pleased to express his condescension; for he speaks to us after the manner of men. As the
body

body has need of raiment, as well as of food, so has the soul. There is the meat which perisheth, and the meat which endureth to eternal life. The same is true of attire both for the outward and for the inward man. Nothing can be plainer, than that the garment here referred to is not a mere external profession of religion; for the man was found among the guests, who were called to the nuptial entertainment with the external call of the gospel.

I shall just mention the sentiments I have met with in various writers on the subject. Some make the wedding garment to signify charity and good works. Others say, it means faith, repentance, and reformation of life. Others make it to be faith, which produces love. Some say, it signifies holiness of heart and life, wrought by the Spirit of God. Others say, it means Christ himself, whom we put on by faith. In my apprehension, we may discover the real meaning from these several opinions. Those things which render an immortal soul meet to enter into the presence of the holy God, are described in scripture by the
figure

figure of raiment. And all that preparation, or fitness, which is necessary to an appearance before God here and hereafter, is styled the wedding garment. Now it is certain, that the scripture speaks,

1. Of Christ and his righteousness under this metaphor.

By the righteousness of Christ we are to understand his obedience to the moral law unto his death; which he performed, not for his own sake, for he was originally above all law, but he condescended to be "made under it," both in its preceptive, and in its penal parts; that he might "bring in an everlasting righteousness for the justification of guilty sinners." And "by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." The law of Moses, as it is a covenant of works, condemns "every one who continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." But the gospel brings these glad tidings, that "what the law could not do, because

“ because it was weak through the flesh, God
“ sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful
“ flesh, and for sin,” has done; he “ has con-
“ demned sin in the flesh, that the righteous-
“ ness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who
“ walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.”
This righteousness of Christ in his priestly
character, is imputed to, or put upon, all them
who believe. It is therefore frequently and
fitly compared to a garment; for it is the
covering of the soul from the avenging eye of
the justice of God. It is that which hides
our deformity, and cancels our guilt; so that
God, instead of entering into judgment with
them who appear before him, arrayed in this
robe of righteousness, approves of them, smiles
upon them, and receives them as those who
are united to Christ in a marriage covenant.
So it is represented in the 45th psalm, the
design of which is to set forth the spiritual
union, which subsists between Christ and his
church. And there it is said of them, that
“ they are all glorious within, their clothing
“ is of wrought gold.” It is a garment of
Christ’s own working; and because it is im-
puted,

puted, and received by faith, therefore it is called the righteousness of the saints.

If ever then you expect to find favour with God, it becomes you to see to it, that you rely wholly on the finished obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ. His righteousness is that garment of salvation, with which every guest whom God bids welcome, is clothed. If ever we are "accepted" to eternal life, it is "in the beloved." Whenever therefore we come before God in the institutions of his worship, let us never forget to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ;" for he is "the Lord our righteousness." Yet they who confine this nuptial raiment to this idea take it in too contracted a sense; for,

2. The scripture describes the graces of a real christian wrought in him by the Spirit of God, under the emblem of raiment.

Sanctification, or holiness, is compared to a garment, without which we are not fit to appear before God in any duty. There is as
much

much necessity of inherent holiness, as there is of imputed righteousness. Accordingly, "Christ is made of God" unto those that believe, nor only "righteousness," but "sanctification." That is, they are made like him in respect of moral excellence, partly in this world, and perfectly in the next. The Holy Spirit produces that change in the heart, whereby there is an hatred of all sin, and a love to all that is good. The several graces which compose the christian temper are of his working. Nevertheless, the saints are commanded to clothe themselves with them. "*Be ye clothed with humility. Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*" "*Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfection.*" Here is an allusion to a garment to be worn by us. And
without

without it we are not qualified to appear before God. For without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.

Now to constitute that raiment of the soul, which is acceptable to God, it is necessary, that there be an holy frame, as well as an holy state. Though "the preparation of the heart in man is of the Lord," this ought by no means to supercede or hinder a careful inspection and enquiry into our spiritual state. When the apostle Paul speaks of the Lord's supper, he says, "Let a man examine himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." This supposes, that some time be previously separated from the world for this purpose. In matters of a secular nature, when men have an affair of consequence before them, it is common to give diligence in preparing for it. Do not tradesmen find the necessity at proper seasons to inspect and settle their accounts? And shall not the christian look into his spiritual affairs, to see how matters stand between God and his soul? Suppose that you were invited to a royal table; would

would you not be concerned to appear in a proper dress, and with a suitable deportment? All to whom the gospel is preached, are called to partake of Christ and the benefits of redemption. In what disposition are your souls? Are you ready to accept the proposal, or do you treat it with neglect?

With respect to the Lord's supper, his people are invited to a participation of that holy ordinance. But you may be discouraged, because your hearts are not prepared according to the purification of the sanctuary. You feel a deadness of affection, a vanity of thought, an hardness of heart; so that you stand in doubt, whether you shall be welcome or not. But be not disheartened at this view of yourselves. For "if the Lord had been pleased to "kill you," as Manoah's wife said on another occasion, "he would not have shewn you these "things." If he has convinced you of your wretchedness and unworthiness, and shewn you your need of a Saviour, you have reason to come not only to his house, but to his table rejoicing. Be not afraid or ashamed to make
a public

a public acknowledgment of Christ as your Lord and Redeemer; but wait on him in all his ordinances, trust in his assistance, and hope for his salvation. I pass on to observe,

3. That an essential part of this wedding garment consists in a course of life becoming a religious profession, or a conversation becoming the gospel.

We read of being “adorned with good works.” It is in vain for any to say, that they believe in God or in Christ, unless they be “careful to maintain good works.” For “faith without works is dead.” It is a dreadful thing indeed, when men “hold the truth in unrighteousness,” and take occasion to sin, because grace abounds. So do not, so cannot, so dare not they who cordially believe on the Son of God. Our Lord says, “Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” The allusion is to the long garments worn in the east, which were used to be girt up. The meaning is, our profession is to fit close upon us; and we are to adorn it

by an exemplary walk and conversation. It is required of all professors, especially of church members, that instead of giving occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully, they "let their light so shine before men, that they seeing their good works, may glorify their Father, who is in heaven." To conclude,

1. What folly, as well as iniquity, is there in hypocrisy.

It may be easy to deceive men; but it is impossible to deceive God. How vain the attempt to impose upon him, who discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart, and who in the great day "will bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil."

2. Let those of us, who approach the table of the Lord, be concerned to appear in that garment, which God has provided.

Some of you have probably for years made a general profession, but have never come to this ordinance of special communion. If it is
a sense

a sense of your unfitness and unworthiness that keeps you away, it is a sign that “ Satan hinders you.” There may be true faith, where there are many fears. To you Christ says, “ Come, for all things are now ready.” And let those of us, who from month to month sit at his table, plead his righteousness, and live upon his fulness, that we may receive from him grace for grace. And let us remember the sacred obligations we bring on ourselves, to imitate him as our pattern, to walk as he walked, and “ to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” Amen.

SELF-EXAMINATION PREPARATORY TO
THE LORD'S SUPPER.

S E R M O N IX.

1 COR. XI. 28.

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.

THERE is not any one ordinance which Christ has instituted in his church, but it has been abused and perverted through the pride and ignorance of men. It has been peculiarly the case with respect to the holy ordinance of the Lord's supper. One would naturally think, that such a religious and plain ceremony as this must have been observed in the primitive times, with all that purity with which our blessed Redeemer appointed it. But when about thirty years had elapsed after his death, gross irregularities were brought into

one famous church, to the great scandal of the christian name. These disorders the apostle highly censures in this chapter. And then he takes occasion to instruct us in the nature and design of the ordinance, according to the mind of Christ. In the words of the text, he lays down a rule for our direction, with a view to a right participation of it. In order to the prevention of a person's "eating and drinking unworthily, let him examine himself, and so (with this preparation) let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

Before I treat on the words, I will remark, that this "eating and drinking unworthily" has no relation to the unworthiness of our persons before God: but to the unbecoming manner of celebrating the ordinance. The best of men readily acknowledge themselves unworthy of the least of all his mercies. And where there is such an humble sense of unworthiness, instead of its being a discouragement, it is matter of thankfulness, and is a token for good. But the unworthiness which is censured, is such a manner of receiving the Lord's supper, as is contrary to the end for which it
was

was appointed. It was appointed, not as a meal for the refreshment of the body; but as a sacred feast for the benefit of the soul. Whereas those Corinthians, whom the apostle rebukes, partook of the ordinance, as if it were a common meal; and by this profanation they were "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord;" guilty of violating that peculiar ordinance, in which his body and blood are represented; and so in a sense crucifying him afresh. And by so doing, "they did eat and drink damnation," or judgment "to themselves." These words have been very terrifying to many a soul. But it is commonly observed, that the Holy Spirit never indited this passage of scripture, to deter serious christians from the duty, though the devil has made this advantage of it, and thereby deprived them of their choicest comforts. Certainly, so vile a prostitution of the Lord's supper, as some of the Corinthians were chargeable with, was such a sin, as that God would reckon with them for it even in this world. And therefore temporal judgments were inflicted upon them. "For this cause, many were sick and weak among them, and some were fallen asleep;" some were punished with diseases, and others with death.

Thus the Lord has shewn, that holy things ought to be treated with the highest reverence and solemnity of spirit. In discoursing on the text,

FIRST, I shall mention some circumstances concerning the ordinance itself; and then,

SECONDLY, I shall consider the duty of self-examination, as a necessary mean of preparation for it.

FIRST, I shall mention some circumstances concerning the ordinance itself, according to the account here given of it. It is called "eating of that bread, and drinking of that cup."

1. The apostle is speaking of that which is actually or literally to be done, because of the commandment of Christ.

When the Lord Jesus instituted it, he took bread and wine, and set them apart. The one was to be eaten, the other drank, in remembrance of his broken body, and the shedding of his blood. Nor is the Lord's
supper

supper properly celebrated, unless these outward elements be received according to the original appointment. Although it is a spiritual ordinance, and to be observed to a spiritual end nevertheless, the communion of the body and blood of Christ has a special relation to the ceremony of breaking bread and drinking wine. What a vile opinion then is that which some maintain, that when Christ said, "Do this in remembrance of me," he intended no more, than that we should remember him as often as we sit down at our own tables. What the scripture calls the Lord's supper, say they, was only a common meal from the beginning. But, if this were all, to what purpose does the apostle say, "Let a man examine himself," and so let him partake? Again,

2. Mention is made of taking of the cup, as well as of the bread.

And this drinking is not confined to him who administers. But the one, equally with the other, is intended for all the communicants. It is not partaking of the Lord's supper to receive in one kind only. When Christ instituted it, upon his delivering the
cup,

cup, he was more particular than when he gave the bread. Foreseeing what a sacrilege would be committed, he says, "Drink ye ALL of it." Farther,

3. We are to remark, that as the bread is called the body of Christ, so the body of Christ is called bread.

We acknowledge that the bread, as soon as consecrated, does in a sense become the body of Christ. It is symbolically so. But then nothing is more evident, than that this body of Christ still retains the name of bread, "Let him eat of that *bread*." It is not said, Let him eat of that *body*, but, "Let him eat of that *bread*;" a piece of that loaf, which is set apart from a common to a sacred use. Therefore, it is not changed into flesh, but is bread, as it was before. Here is no more alteration of the substance than there is of the taste: nor would that notion of transubstantiation have been propagated in the world, if God had not given men up to believe a lie. When our Lord says, "This is my body," the meaning is, this bread as broken is a symbol, an emblem and memorial of my body as broken for sin.

fin. Nothing is more obvious, than that a figure is used when we read of "drinking the cup," or of the cup, which is put for the wine contained in it.

4. One thing more is observable, viz. when the apostle speaks of eating of "that bread, and drinking of that cup," he refers to the outward manner in which that holy ordinance was to be observed; I mean that posture of body which is to be used.

Now, though the posture in which the jews appeared at their meals was somewhat different from our's, being recumbent, yet it was not the custom of any people to eat and drink kneeling. This practice was set on foot in the church of Rome, when the people were taught to adore the consecrated elements. No ordinance of Christ has been more perverted than this I am upon. By the papists it is turned into a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead. It is not called by them the Lord's supper, but the sacrifice of the mass. Moreover, it is given not only by them, but by others, as a passport to heaven; and by too
many

many protestants it is attended, as if it were an atoning service, or the cause of wiping out the debts they owe to the justice of God. But all such things are detested by those who are truly worthy, or proper receivers; whose reliance is alone upon Christ for acceptance with God; and who approach the institution as a mean appointed for the mortification of sin, and for their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

I shall only observe farther on this part of the subject, that it is an ordinance of communion in two respects: for hereby we keep up communion with God our Saviour, and christian fellowship one with another. "Eating of that bread, and drinking of that cup," carries with it both those ideas. And so we read, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For (as it should be rendered) "the bread is one, and we being many, are one body; for we all are partakers of that one bread."

SECONDLY,

SECONDLY, I shall now pass on to the duty of self examination, as a necessary mean of preparation for the holy ordinance. "Let a man examine himself."

Its being expressed indefinitely, shows that it is incumbent on every person who approaches the table of the Lord; "and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." The original word is sometimes rendered *to prove*, and sometimes *to approve*. Critics observe, that it properly signifies such an examination as brings matters to a resolution. It is not only proving, but proving in order to a judgment; such as brings it to an issue; that there is a determinate judgment made concerning the thing of which a proof is taken. Hence the word signifies to prove and try, and to approve, on proving.

Here I shall speak of this duty in general; and then more particularly in its connection with the subject before us.

1. As to the duty of self-examination in general.

We

We have directions to it, and examples of it in the word of God. Such directions as these. "Commune with your own heart." "Let us search and try our ways." And in the New Testament, among other places, it is expressly enjoined, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." As to examples, Nehemiah says, "I consulted with myself." And how common is it for the psalmist to be found so doing. "I commune with my own heart, and my spirit made diligent search." He frequently speaks to his "soul" to "return to God, to hope in him, to praise, and to bless him."

To examine ourselves is, in a serious manner, to talk freely with our souls, to enquire into our condition and necessities, to search into our spiritual state and disposition; to ask ourselves what we are before God; what we have received from him; what we still need; what transgressions we are chargeable with; and the duties we have omitted, or carelessly performed. And this implies that we separate a portion of time for this purpose.

Too

Too many professors take it for granted, that all matters are right between God and them, and think, that therefore they need not make any enquiry into themselves. And some are greatly given to examine others, while they are strangers at home. They look much without, on the conduct of their brethren and neighbours in a way of censure, but never properly reflect on themselves. This reluctance to the duty is certainly a proof of our depravity. And when we do set about it with some earnestness, and put a question or two to our souls; how ready is some imagination or other of a thing quite foreign to arise before us! How prone is the heart to wander to an impertinent subject! But notwithstanding the work is attended with so great difficulty; it is, nevertheless, a service which God requires; and if it be conscientiously done, will prove very advantageous to the soul. Self examination is a duty, in the neglect of which no real christian can live. And yet, I fear, it is seldom performed; and then in so slight and cursory a manner, that it is not to be wondered at, that there is so little profiting in the spiritual life; yea, that there are such sad decays in christian experience, as to both knowledge and
grace.

grace. If a tradesman do not examine into his accounts, cast up his books, and narrowly look into his dealings with others, and the dealings of others with him, how shall it be known what is the true state of his affairs? If a man who professes to carry on a correspondence with heaven, considers not, nor inspects the transactions which pass between God and his soul, how can he be acquainted with his real condition? It is an expression of Dr. Owen, "Write that man a fruitless christian, who calls not himself to an account about his increases and decays in grace."

I am afraid that many such fruitless christians there are, because they are so negligent in the duty here recommended. When they rise in the morning, instead of making it a business to consider what temptations are before them, and to enquire what their souls stand in need of; they just hurry over a prayer, and then with all diligence enter upon the concerns of the world. And (to use great plainness of speech) if it be on a Lord's day morning, how many will indulge themselves in bed so much the longer, that they may have but little more than
time

time to dress and refresh the body, before they go to public worship: which is one reason why some are late in their attendance.

Now, why should there not be as much diligence given, that the soul may prosper, as that the body may be in health, and worldly concerns be succeeded? As a mean of promoting the prosperity of the soul, the Lord has enjoined the duty of self-examination. And, under a sense of the difficulty which attends the right discharge of it, be importunate in prayer, that the Holy Spirit would help your infirmities: He is said to search and try you, when he enables you to search and try yourselves. Thus David prays, “ Search me, O
“ God, and know my heart, try me and know
“ my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked
“ way in me, and lead me in the way ever-
“ lasting.” The Lord perfectly knows the real state of every one's soul: His omniscient eye discerns between the hypocrite and the sincere. And is it not desirable, that we should know our spiritual condition, that we may not deceive our own souls? In order to this, the

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duty

duty of self-examination is to be performed in a dependence on the aid of the blessed Spirit.

We are to take the word of God as the rule by which to try ourselves. There is need of this direction, because it is too commonly neglected. Many professors compare themselves with others; and because they are not so bad as they, or because they are more diligent than others, therefore conclude that all is well with them. It would be well for those persons, did they but try any one of their duties by the law of God. In so doing, they would see how defective it is; how short it comes of that standard. And therefore, instead of the least self applause, there is reason for self condemnation.

What I say then is this. Take the word of God before you. Read the marks and characters of a truly godly man, as they are recorded there. Search to the bottom of your heart, and look into the actions of your life. And, moreover, look up to God, that he would enable you to judge righteous judgment.

2. The

2. The duty of self-examination is more particularly required, in order to, and in connection with, a right participation of the Lord's supper:

“Let a man,” any one who is about to approach the Lord's table, “examine himself; and so,” with a prepared heart; “eat of that” sacramental “bread, and drink of that” sacramental “cup.” This is necessary to prevent the sin of unworthy receiving.

(1.) Let each one examine himself with respect to his state and condition before God.

The Lord's supper was not instituted as a converting, but as a confirming ordinance. And yet all who attend it are not converted, however they may appear in the judgment of charity. It becomes us, in a serious and solemn manner, to enquire whether we have experienced the reality of the grace of God. What evidences can we produce of conversion? Ask your own soul, whether you have been convinced of your sinful and miserable state by nature. Have you seen the desert of your transgressions; and

that if God were to inflict upon you the sentence of his law, and punish you in hell for ever, he would give you no more than your due? Have you beheld the corruption of your heart, so as to lament it before God? And upon being made sensible of your sin and misery, has Christ been applied to, and trusted in, as the only Saviour from sin and destruction? If sin be not odious, and Christ precious to your soul, you have no reason to think that you are converted. And they who are not converted, however devout they may appear to men, are in a very unfit state to appear before God in this ordinance.

(2.) Let a man examine himself, as to his knowledge to discern the Lord's body.

Some, in the Corinthian church, forgetting the original intention of the ordinance, put no difference between the sacred memorials of the body and blood of Christ, and their ordinary food; and so came with no more preparation to the Lord's table, than to their own. We are to enquire into our knowledge to discern the Lord's body. It is not a sufficient qualification

fication to have a speculative knowledge of Christ; that he assumed our nature, and went through a course of obedience and suffering unto death. But such a knowledge is required of the end and design of his giving himself, as is affecting to the soul. Do we apprehend that the sacramental elements are external and visible signs, signifying things of everlasting concern to us? Mr. Charnock observes, that “to discern the Lord’s body, is
“to consider it as the body of the Son of God,
“the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth.
“The design of this body was, to be a sacrifice for sin. The death of his body is the
“price of our liberty, and the life of our
“souls. We do not discern the Lord’s body,
“when our sense sticks on the outward elements, and our souls rise not up to view the
“merits and propitiation of Christ through the
“vail of bread and wine; as if the elements
“only were the things upon which we were
“to feast: whereas a spiritual discerning is the
“thing required.”

(3.) Let a man examine himself, as to his motives and ends in approaching the table of the Lord.

What is the purpose of his heart? What is his aim, his intention, in coming to so solemn an institution? Are you induced by custom, or by the command of Christ, who says, "Do this in remembrance of me?" In which words we are taught, that the great design of the ordinance is to call to mind the love of Christ in giving himself to be a sacrifice for sin. Consequently, it is a feast upon a sacrifice. And therefore we are to come, that we may feed upon him by faith, and so derive spiritual strength for promoting the life and prosperity of our souls. We are to come, that we may renew our covenant engagements, to testify our allegiance to Christ the only King and Head of his church, to profess our dependence upon him for salvation, and to express our affectionate regard to his people. Look into your own hearts, and enquire, wherefore you approach the Lord's table. Once more,

(4.) Let us enquire into our wants.

If our hearts be in any measure prepared, we shall see, that we want pardon for our numerous

merous offences. We want strength against inward corruptions and outward temptations. We want more grace, more light and knowledge, more faith and love, patience and resignation, spiritual and heavenly mindedness. And among other things, let us enquire, whether we do not want a broken and contrite heart. For it becomes us to approach with a godly sorrow, looking to a crucified Saviour, and mourning for sin.

I shall close the whole with these two particulars.

1. Let such as have not given themselves up to the Lord in this holy ordinance consider, wherefore it is they live in a neglect of it.

If you be not fit for this duty, you are not fit for death and heaven. And O consider, if God should summon you into eternity, while you are unprepared to stand before him, what a terrible situation will you be in for ever! But if it be the desire of your souls to join yourselves to the Lord and to his people, that you may commemorate his love; if you be

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willing

willing to walk with them in all his ordinances and commandments blameless; it is only a temptation of Satan which keeps you away, till you find yourselves prepared.

2. Let us examine ourselves not only before receiving, but afterwards.

This is a duty which it is to be feared is little attended to. As we ought to take convenient time for preparation previous to the ordinance, so afterwards we should enquire, what was the frame of our hearts; what were the transactions which passed between God and us. And let us consider, that having come under renewed obligations to be the Lord's, we are therefore more strongly bound "to serve him in righteousness and holiness all the days of our lives."

S E R M O N X.

PSALM CXLIX. 9.

—*This honour have all the saints.*—

IT is doubtful to what particular period of time the contents of this psalm are to be referred. Some interpreters go so far back as the exploits of Joshua, that renowned general, who executed the righteous vengeance of God upon the inhabitants of Canaan. With a divine warrant in his hand, “he executed upon them the judgment written,” or the awful punishment that was threatened against them in the law of Moses. The measure of their iniquity was full, and that was the time for their extirpation. “This honour,” of being the instruments of inflicting the just judgments of God, “had all the saints,” or all the Israelites; inasmuch

inasmuch as they were all embarked in the same cause, and all shared in the same conquest. "The high praises of God were in their mouth, while a two-edged sword was in their hand."

Other interpreters refer the psalm to the victories which David obtained over his enemies all around him. But there are others, who think that the psalm, in its full extent, looks so far forward as to the days of the gospel, when by the ministry of the apostles and others, spiritual judgments were inflicted on the inveterate enemies of the people of God. For my part, I suppose, that the account given in the foregoing verses is applicable to whatever time the professing people of God are spirited up, to assert and vindicate their rights and liberties in opposition to the tyrannical power of their oppressive enemies. But as "no scripture is of private interpretation," my design is not to consider the passage in a political, but in a spiritual sense.

In the opinion of the men of this world, there are three things which constitute happiness;

ness; and they are, honour, wealth, and pleasures. The ambitious man is striving with all his might to climb up the hill of honour. The covetous wretch is digging in the bowels of the earth for the riches that lie there. The voluptuous libertine is seeking to gratify his sensual appetites and inclinations. The apostle tells us, “ All that is in the world, the lust of
“ the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride
“ of life, is not of the Father, but is of the
“ world.” The lust of the flesh signifies the pleasures of sense; the lust of the eyes the riches of the world, and the pride of life the honours it contains.

I purpose, God willing, to lay before you, in several discourses, the honour, the riches, and the pleasures of a true christian; and to shew you how far they exceed the honours, the riches, and the pleasures of this vain world; and all with a view, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to excite you to set your “ af-
“ fection on things above, not on things that
“ are upon the earth.”

I begin

I begin with the first of these, and have chosen this text to let you see what that *honour* is which God confers on all his saints. But previous to this I shall lay down two propositions.

1. It is necessary, in order to answer the ends of the divine government among mankind, in this imperfect state, that some should be placed in posts of honour, and others in a state of subjection.

The levelling doctrine, whatever appearance of humility it wears, I am apt to think, proceeded from the pride of nature. Those in lower stations wanted to pull down others, that they might advance themselves. But “God is the judge; he sets up one, and puts down another.” And in the various nations of the earth, “promotion comes not from the west, from the east, or from the south;” it does not come by chance or mere accident; but God, as the ruler of the world, has in all ages appointed, that some should govern others. And it is a duty founded in the law of nature,
and

and established in the gospel of Christ with peculiar motives, to “pray for kings, and all that are in authority.” “Put them in mind,” says Paul to Titus, “to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates.” Magistracy is the ordinance of God, as well as the ministry; which two things ought ever to be considered as distinct. The church and the world were never joined together by God, and therefore the office of the magistrate cannot extend to the consciences of men. He is ordained for the punishment of evil doers, and for a praise to them that do well. No, nor has the church, or any religious order of men, a right to usurp authority over conscience. This I mention, because in some bibles, in the contents, or the chief heads of this psalm, it is said, that “the prophet exhorts to praise God for that power which he has given to the church, to rule the consciences of men.” Such an assertion, whoever was the author of it, is destructive of the liberties of human nature, and directly contrary to the word of God. God alone is the Lord and Ruler of conscience; nor will he ever give this prerogative out of his own hands.

2. Another thing I would observe is, that dominion is not founded in grace.

It is not because such and such men are faints, that therefore they ought to exercise dominion over others. Christ's kingdom is not of this world, but it is a spiritual constitution. The honour that pertains to all the faints, as such, is a privilege connected with another world. In the words we have two things.

FIRST, A description of the people of God; they are faints.

SECONDLY, Their dignity and preferment; or what that honour is to which God raises them.

FIRST, Consider the description here given of God's people; they are faints.

This character belonged to the people of Israel. Aaron, by way of eminence, is styled, "the faint of the Lord," because there was a peculiar solemnity attending his separation to the office of high priest, in the execution of which,

which, he had in a particular manner to do with the holy things. That people in their national capacity are called an holy people to the Lord. He chose them above all other people; he revealed himself to them, and fixed the tokens of his presence among them.

But under the gospel dispensation, this description is brought within narrower bounds. It is applied to those churches to which the apostle directs his epistles, because they were made up, according to the judgment of charity, of such as were holy persons. The apostle to the Romans says, that they were "called to be faints," or were called faints; from whence it is easy to remark, how erroneous that notion of the papists is, that no good men are faints till they get to heaven; nor are made faints there, till the pope is pleased to canonize them. This is one extreme. Another is, when ungodly men use the word in a way of reproach and ridicule, which shews their hatred to the thing. But though the term is not so commonly used as the word christian, yet every true christian is a faint indeed. Doctor Goodwin has this expression: "This title of faint is in these times
" out

“ out of use, but it is because true holiness is
“ out of fashion.”

There are four things which enter into, and complete the character.

1. Saints are separated persons.

God has set them apart for himself. He made choice of some of mankind above others to be “ vessels of mercy ;” which shews, that he beheld them as they lay in sin and misery. When God has found out his people, (speaking after the manner of men) he appropriates them to himself; so that though they continue in the world, they are no longer of the world.

2. They are saints whom God makes like himself in holiness.

This comes to the same as “ the sanctification of the Spirit.” None are saints, properly speaking, who are not sanctified; and none are sanctified, but by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. To be a saint, is not so much as to be perfect, or free from all sin; and it is much more than the having a moral character

fracter and a good name among men. It is in vain for any to look on himself as a faint, who does not abhor all sin, and love universal holiness. This is the principle and the privilege of the people of God, who have the divine likeness drawn upon them.

3. They who are faints of God's making are devoted to his service.

Under the law, the person or thing that was denominated holy was dedicated to God; and in an evangelical sense, they who are faints are the Lord's by self-dedication. Every one that is godly, consecrates himself to the Lord, to be used as an instrument in promoting his glory, in the station wherein Divine Providence places him. All God's faints are "his servants devoted to his fear." Once more,

4. It follows, that they who are faints of God's making, are holy in their conversation in the world.

Being set apart for God, endued with a principle of grace, and having presented them-

R

selves

felves to him, there must be an answerable course of living; for “if the tree be good, the
“ fruit will also be good.”

Mr. Baxter gives this title to one of the many books which he published, “A Saint or
“ a Brute,” in which he says, “He that will
“ not choose a life of holiness, has no other to
“ fall into, than a life of sensuality. Either
“ the superior faculties proper to a rational na-
“ ture must be predominant, and then we can
“ be no less than saints; or else the inferior
“ brutish faculties will be predominant, and
“ then we are brutes in the shape of men.”

But I shall chiefly observe,

SECONDLY, The dignity and preferment of all the saints; or what is that honour which God confers upon them.

Our Lord, speaking to the carnal jews, and especially to the pharisees, says, “How can ye
“ believe, which receive honour one of an-
“ other, and seek not the honour that comes
“ from God only.” Their hearts were set on
the

the pomp of the world, and the applause of men, so that they could not believe in Christ, who came among them in a low condition. There is an honour that comes from God only, which is to be sought of him, and “them that honour him he will honour.” Among men, goodness and greatness are often divided; but in the kingdom of Christ they are always united. However mean and despicable many good people may appear in the eye of the world, they are all precious and honourable in the sight of the Lord.

But previously observe, that by sin our souls are reduced to a wretched and dishonourable state. Man is not, as he was originally made. In a state of innocence he was crowned with glory and honour; but “the crown is fallen from our head, woe unto us, for we have sinned.” They are proud, knowing nothing, who cry up the dignity of human nature in its present condition. So far are we from being such glorious creatures, that all other things answer the end of their creation, while man, sinful man, is an apostate, an enemy, a rebel, and a traitor to his lawful Sovereign. This is

the language of God to man, “Thou didst de-
 “base thyself, even to hell.” Hence it fol-
 lows, that the honour to which the saints, as
 such, are promoted, comes from God, the
 fountain of it. From a motive within him-
 self, he is pleased to make some of mankind
 his favourites. “He raises up the poor out of
 “the dust, and lifts the needy out of the
 “dunghill, that he may set him with princes,
 “even with the princes of his people.” The
 honour which God confers upon them, comes
 from him as the God of grace, according to
 the settlements of the everlasting covenant.
 Here I would observe,

1. Such honour have all the saints, as to be
 the servants of the King of heaven.

It is reckoned among the honours of the
 world to be the servants of the crown. This is
 only a shadow of that dignity to which all
 God’s people are preferred. Wicked men, it
 is true, are sometimes in scripture stiled his
 servants. He raises them up, and makes use
 of them to answer a particular purpose, and
 then lays them aside. These are passive, rather
 than

than active, in his service. But I speak of those who obey him from the heart, who love their Master, and are ready to receive and comply with his orders. And this their attendance on him they account their privilege. How can it be otherwise than an honour, to wait on him who is the “King of kings, and “Lord of lords.”

2. Is it accounted an honour among men to have a noble descent?—This honour have all the saints, to have an heavenly extraction.

Men of high degree are too ready to look down with a supercilious air on men of low degree, because, as they term it, they have no blood in them. This is but a little thing for a man to value himself upon, for Solomon tells us, “Better is a poor and wise child, than “an old and foolish king.”

David said to Saul’s courtiers, “Seems it to “you a light thing to be a king’s son-in-law, “seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?” If this be such a dignity, what then must it be to be born of God? to have,

as it were, the blood royal of heaven run in the veins? to be “the sons and daughters of the “Lord Almighty?” This is effected by regenerating grace. It is often the case, that “they “who are poor in the world are rich in faith, “and heirs of the kingdom of heaven.” Among men; only one of a family is the heir, but in God’s family, all his children are heirs. In earthly kingdoms it is not always the case, that princes are endued with a princely spirit. Some act a base and ignoble part. But all the children of God are partakers of a divine nature; and it ill becomes any who profess to be of that number to live after the flesh.

3. “This honour have all the saints,” to be approved of God, and admitted into an holy familiarity with him.

What an honour is it esteemed among men, to be taken into the favour of the great and noble? But what is this, to the approbation of that God, “whose judgment is always according to truth?” As to the persons of his people they are “accepted in the beloved.” As to their dispositions, “God works in them that
“ which

“ which is well pleasing in his sight.” And with respect to their religious services, these are regarded as offerings pleasing to God through the Mediator.

The saints have freedom of access into the presence of the heavenly King; they have access to his throne, to his house, to his table, and even to his heart. “ The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant.” He shews them by his word and Spirit the fulness, the freeness, the suitability, and immutability of it. “ Thus he manifests himself to them as he does not unto the world.”

4. The Lord honours his people by visiting them.

It is not the frequent custom of kings to make visits to their subjects; but the King of heaven every day comes to his people, and brings a blessing with him. How desirous was David of this honour. “ O when wilt thou come unto me ?” And at another time he prays, “ O visit me with thy salvation.”

R 4

5. Let

5. Let us carry our thoughts into a future state, and consider to what heights of dignity and glory he will raise all his saints another day.

He will promote them to great honour indeed, for “they shall sit with Christ in his throne;” and thus they shall share with him in his glory.

The apostle says, “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And know ye not that we shall judge angels?” The meaning cannot be, that such are joined with Christ in his authority and commission, but they concur in the sentence he will pass upon the world of the ungodly, and on the fallen angels. They, as assessors with Christ, will approve and applaud the transactions of that solemn day. “This honour have all the saints” to appear with him in glory; and they shall reign with him for ever and ever.

By way of application observe,

Does

Does this honour appertain to all the faints? What a motive is this to live up to their character and dignity? Of all men it may be expected, that the honourable of the earth should maintain an honourable deportment. The mother of king Lemuel cautioned him against those criminal actions which would prove his ruin; and in order to deter him, she puts him in mind of his high birth, that it would be a disgrace and a dishonour to him, a profanation of his crown, to be guilty of immoral conduct. "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink." Such ought peculiarly to be on their guard, that they disguise not themselves. Apply this to the people of God, who are so highly favoured as to be born of him. It is not for you, ye children of the Most High, it is not for you, to go into the excesses of the age in which you live; but, on the contrary, to keep yourselves unspotted from the world. "Fornication, and all uncleanness," (all kinds of intemperance) "or covetousness, let it not be once named among you as becometh faints." And not only abstain from those things,

things, the doing of which would lessen your dignity, but also make it appear to others, that this honour conferred upon you by the King of heaven, is not a fiction, but a reality, by being "holy in all manner of conversation."

THE RICHES OF A REAL CHRISTIAN.

SERMON XI.

REVELATION II. 9.

I know thy poverty, but thou art rich.

THERE are three things which constitute happiness in the opinion of worldly men, namely, honour, wealth, and pleasure. Answering to these three objects of pursuit, I proposed to consider the honour, the riches, and the pleasures of a true christian. Having treated of the first of these things, I now design to speak upon the second.

The angel of the church in Smyrna, to whom our Lord here directs himself, was Polycarp, who was a disciple of the apostle John, and who suffered martyrdom for Christ in the
city

city of Smyrna, where he preached the gospel. "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty." It is as if the Son of God had said, I am perfectly acquainted with all your religious services and labours of love, together with the afflictions you undergo for your steadfast adherence to my cause, even to the loss of your worldly goods, and I approve of your faith and patience under all your sufferings; but, though you are reduced to poverty by the rapacious hands of persecutors, yet, in a spiritual sense, "thou art rich," and that is more than a balance to all the distress thou canst endure in this present life.

Whatever be the external condition of the people of God in this world, it is their privilege to be made partakers of those blessings, which constitute them rich with respect to another world. In a civil and national capacity we are an opulent people, notwithstanding the multitudes of poor there are among us; but in the kingdom of grace there is not one poor person to be found. Some are richer than others, but all of the household of faith are rich towards God.

As

As to the outward situation of men, "God regards the rich no more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands." A man may value himself upon his riches, and others may "have his person in admiration because of advantage;" but God's thoughts and ways are not as man's. "Man looks to the outward appearance, but the Lord looks to the heart."

Among men it is sometimes the case, that honour and wealth are separate things. A person may have an honourable title, and, at the same time no estate to support his dignity: and, on the other hand, there are men of great possessions, who are destitute of preferment. But in the church of Christ, all the saints are both honoured and enriched by him.

In order to set this matter in its proper light, it is necessary to consider these two things.

1. By sin we have reduced ourselves to a most impoverished state.

We

We have a lively and instructive image of this in the parable of the prodigal son: He had his portion of goods given him, a sufficiency in all things; and when he had obtained what he desired, instead of improving it, he spent it all, and soon reduced himself to a vile and abject condition. So it was with Adam, whom God at first set up for himself, upon his own foundation; but he soon lost his all, and brought his posterity as well as himself to beggary; for he was our federal head, by a wise and righteous constitution of God. We come into the world as destitute in a spiritual, as in a natural sense. A state of sin cannot but be a state of want, for God, the author of happiness, being departed from the soul, nothing but indigence and misery can succeed. Too many indeed are like the Laodiceans, they "think that they are rich, and stand in need of nothing." Some think their reason is sufficient for them; others glory in their righteousness, their religious privileges, and their alms-deeds; but in the midst of all their imaginary fulness, they are in straits, "poor, and wretched, and miserable." One who

who is deprived of the use of his rational powers, may imagine that he has great affluence; and a man in a dream may think he is full, but when he awakes, behold he is empty. So it is with all those who are under the infatuating power of sin. "The god of this world has "blinded the eyes" of their minds, and blown up the pride of their hearts, that instead of seeing their souls ready to perish for want, they indulge an high conceit of their sufficiency. But it is infinitely better to be undeceived in this world than in another. Whatever be your worldly circumstances, if you are without Christ, you are in an impoverished condition. A poor man may be in the company of the rich and the great, and be surrounded with the wealth of others; and thus unconverted sinners may associate with the people of God, and be encompassed with spiritual privileges, but all the while their souls are reduced to the lowest necessity.

2. It follows, that if we ever become rich towards God, we must be made so.

With

With respect to temporal wealth, God has declared once and again in his word, that he is the donor of it. "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, that it is he who gives thee power to get wealth. The diligent hand makes rich." And yet there are many diligent persons that are always poor. No undertaking will succeed, but by the blessing of God upon it. Now if we are to look to God as the fountain of worldly riches, much more ought we to regard spiritual riches as the fruit of his goodness, not distributed in a common way, but in a particular channel, according to the constitution of his covenant. If in things natural, it is God who makes one man to differ from another, much more in things that pertain to the soul and eternity.

Our Lord says in the text, "I know thy poverty, but thou art rich!" Of others he may say, I know thy riches, but thou art poor. Some are poor in the world, but rich in a spiritual sense; others are rich in the world, but poor in a spiritual sense; a third sort are poor, both in temporals and spirituals too, while a
fourth

fourth sort are rich for both worlds. The riches of a true christian lie beyond the reach of sense, and are discerned only by an eye of faith. They are not made up of sensitive enjoyments, but consist of "spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus," one of which has more intrinsic value in it than all the possessions of this world put together. Estimates may be made of earthly goods, but the portion of God's children is inestimable. Here consider,

FIRST, What they have in hand. And,

SECONDLY, What they have in hope. They have much in possession, much more in rever-
sion.

FIRST, The people of God are in possession of those things whereby they are enriched.

However mean and despicable some of them may appear in the eye of a carnal world, nevertheless they are more excellent than they all.

S

1. They

1. They are rich in the sight of God, as they are richly adorned with the robe of Christ's righteousness.

“ I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul
“ shall be joyful in my God ; for he hath cloth-
“ ed me with the garments of salvation, he hath
“ covered me with the robe of righteousness,
“ as a bridegroom decketh himself with orna-
“ ments, and as a bride adorneth herself with
“ her jewels.” The idea is borrowed from the
glittering attire worn on a nuptial occasion.
Answering to this we read, that “ the church
“ is all glorious within, her clothing is of
“ wrought gold ; she shall be brought to the
“ king in raiment of needle-work.” As to
the unconverted, they appear before God in
nothing better than filthy rags ; but they who
believe through grace, are rich in their spiritual
apparel, for the righteousness of Christ is im-
puted to them, and put upon them.

2. The riches of a christian consist of those
saving graces which are wrought within him.

We

We read, that “ a good man out of the
“ good treasure of his heart brings forth good
“ things.” The treasure is sanctifying grace,
and the heart is the repository of it. It is the
seat of those graces which are stiled the fruits
of the Spirit. In that cabinet the treasure is
lodged ; but then remember, it is laid up for
use, for it is to be brought forth. What is said
of some is true of all the people of God :
“ They are rich in faith, and heirs of the king-
“ dom.” Faith is an enriching grace, not only
as it is the hand of the soul to receive supplies
from Christ, but also, as it makes the soul excel-
lent and valuable in the sight of God ; and so
it may be said of other graces. One is richer
in grace than another, but all believers are gra-
cious.

3. The riches of God’s people consist of
those spiritual gifts which he communicates to
them.

There may be spiritual gifts where there is
no saving grace ; and there may be saving
grace, where there are very few spiritual gifts.
The edification of the church in great measure

depends upon the proper exercise of them. The gifts of prayer, of knowledge, and of utterance, are not to be laid up in a napkin, but they are talents to be produced and used for the good of others. The apostle speaks of this kind of riches. "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;" and then he adds, "that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge." Once more,

4. The riches of a believer lie in those spiritual consolations with which he is favoured.

If saving grace may be compared to gold, these consolations may be likened to jewels. These are rare things, and what a believer does not always carry with him. It is worth while to observe the difference in the apostle's language, when he is speaking of these things. "I myself am also persuaded of you, brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." He was persuaded they had both gifts and graces; but as to consolation, he
prays

prays in the foregoing verse, that they might partake of it. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." I proceed,

SECONDLY, To consider the riches which a true christian has in hope.

While in this world, he has a treasure within him, but it is in heaven the great estate is secured. There his best effects lie, as the apostle intimates: "They are begotten again to an inheritance that fades not away; reserved in heaven for them." It is a full possession of all that blessedness which man is capable of: "a better and an enduring substance;" infinitely better than this world can give; better than all the good things which believers now enjoy; and that which is the top of all, it is a substance that endures for ever. But who among the sons of men, yea, who among the sons of God, can give us an adequate description of the riches of eternity? Not the heart of man can conceive, not the tongue of an angel can express it. Blessed are they who have entered

upon that inheritance, where they find, that the half of it was not told them.

1. They are rich in the full enjoyment of God, Father, Son, and Spirit. They see God face to face; they behold him in righteousness, and are satisfied with his presence. And,

2. They have the perfection of holiness and joy. There's no sin in their souls, no flatness in their duties, no heaviness and sorrow of heart; but holiness is their nature, joy is their life, praise is their employment; and love, perfect love, cements and actuates them all for ever. Well may we say with admiration, as David does, "O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!"

In farther meditating on the subject, I shall consider,

I. The sources whence the spiritual riches of a christian are derived; and then,

II. Shew

II. Shew you the excellency of them above the riches of this world.

I. The sources whence the spiritual riches of a christian are derived.

As they are too great for any but God to give, so whenever he bestows them, it is in pursuance of his eternal, wise, and gracious purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus. The everlasting love of God lies at the foundation of all our happiness. And they who are sensible of their spiritual poverty, instead of quarrelling at the distinction which God makes between one and another, see the greatest reason to rejoice, that he has taken up any thoughts of peace at all, and would join with David in saying, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me." And if he did not think upon us, so as to make spiritual provision in and through a Mediator, we must continue poor and needy for ever.

Again. These spiritual riches are to be viewed as legacies bequeathed to believers by Jesus Christ.

He, as the testator of the covenant, says to his disciples, "Peace I leave with you." Peace here comprehends all the riches of grace and glory, which he *wills* to his disciples in every age and nation. In human wills it is necessary that the legatees should be expressed by name; but it was not necessary it should be so in Christ's will. However, he has described those that have a right to the great and good things which he has left; and, to speak in our way, believers may put in their claim, and insist on their right, notwithstanding their enemies may put in a caveat. They who see and lament their wretchedness by nature, and esteem Christ to be all in all to them, have cause to hope that they were included in his last will, or that they are his legatees: they are owned in heaven to be lawful heirs.

The apostle says, "Where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of the testator." Our Lord Jesus sealed the New Testament, or covenant, with his blood. By his death it is ratified and confirmed, and the blessed contents of it are made sure to all the [heirs of promise; so that a way is made for
the

the communication of the spiritual riches. “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” *His* being rich, signifies that he was possessed of all the glorious perfections of deity. His becoming poor includes his humiliation even to the death of the cross. And his people’s being rich through his poverty, means, that his death is the meritorious cause of all those enriching blessings, they partake of in time and eternity. Well then, the death of Christ is a source from whence the spiritual riches of a christian are drawn; and O how much more valuable are the riches of the soul, than all the wealth of this world.

Farther observe, Christ is to be regarded by us as the treasury in which these spiritual riches are contained.

Christ not only died as the testator, but he rose again to be the executor of his own will; and in order to that, he is to be considered, as one
who

who has possession of all those blessings which he bequeathed to his people. Human wills may be altered, revoked, and cancelled; but Christ's will is unchangeable.

What I now speak of is, it is in Christ as a living Redeemer, that all the treasures of grace are lodged. They are in his hands, and they are safe hands. Some among men have acted a base and treacherous part towards those for whom they were left in trust. Others, for want of prudence, have done those things which turn out to the greatest detriment of those committed to their care. But Christ is such a guardian, that it is the greatest of mercies to be under his peculiar care. He is a trustee, that is infinite both in knowledge and power. While believers are in the world, they are in a state of minority. Christ therefore keeps the inheritance for them, till they arrive at full age; only he let's them have present supplies by the way; and they that know him are willing to trust him. It has pleased the Father, that "in him should all fulness dwell;" and it is matter of the highest satisfaction to them,
that

that he has the direction and management of all their concerns.

Again observe. It is an interest in Christ, that gives a title to the spiritual riches. They who are united to him by faith have a right to all the blessings he has purchased. There are many professors, that value a portion in the world before a part in Christ. But supposing such a thing, that any of you could say, all the riches of the Indies are my property, it would not be comparable to a person's saying on good ground, Christ is mine; "my Lord and my God." They who believe in him, who have ventured their eternal all with him, have a sure title to all those soul-enriching mercies which are treasured up in him.

Once more observe; The Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of Christ, is the great distributor. Our Lord promised his disciples, that the Spirit shall take of his, and shew it to them; not only make a declaration, but an application of it. He bestows the rich blessings contained in the fulness of Christ at the very time they are most wanted. I now proceed,

II. To

II. To shew you the excellency of spiritual riches above the best things of this present world.

1. They are substantial in their own nature.

It is true, earthly things have a reality in them, such as gold, silver, precious stones, houses, lands, or whatever the estates of men consist of. But when the greatest worldly good is put into competition with the least heavenly blessing, it is nothing better than a shadow. The world, with all its emoluments, is a thing of nought. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?" Indeed, all the riches of time have no existence in the divine life. But with respect to spiritual riches, these are matters of the highest moment, solid and weighty; they subsist of themselves, and have no dependence on earthly things.

2. They are adequate to the desires of an immortal soul, and therefore cannot but be satisfying.

Our

Our Lord says, in the character of Wisdom, "That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures." These treasures are the capacities of the soul, which in themselves are so extensive, that if all mortal things were put into them, they would not be sufficient to fill them. On the other hand, let the desires of the heart be ever so enlarged, there is enough in Christ to content them all. "Open thy mouth wide," says he, "and I will fill it." They who are interested in the true riches, know that they can satisfy the utmost of their wishes. "He that loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loves abundance with increase." But he that loves spiritual riches shall be satisfied with them; for "God will supply all his need, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ." The munificence of a covenant God in Christ must be proportionate to the desires of an immortal soul.

3. The riches which are conferred by Christ on his people are essential to the life of the soul.

Earthly

Earthly wealth is so far from being essential to the happiness of this present life, that contentment is often found in a low station, while there is much impatience in an exalted condition. But as to the true riches, they are absolutely necessary; for without pardon and grace, the soul is undone for ever. Whether you are poor or rich, it matters not, with respect to your everlasting state. The most material thing is, whether you are rich towards God, whether you are at peace with him, and conformed to him. These are things essential to your well-being.

4. The riches in which believers are interested are unsearchable.

We read of "the unsearchable riches of Christ." As they lie in him, they have a depth that cannot be fathomed; and as they are bestowed, they cannot be fully known in their worth and value. Do you see your need of greater treasures of knowledge, and grace, and consolation? Be not afraid of asking too much, for the treasure is inexhaustible.

5. The riches which Christ bestows on his people are of a soul-humbling property.

Too

Too often do we see the minds of men elated in proportion as they rise in the world. The rich man is apt to glory in his riches, as if they added some real worth to him. "With thy wisdom and understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures: by thy great wisdom, and by thy traffic, hast thou increased thy riches." So far so good, provided they are obtained by lawful means. But then comes the heavy charge, "And thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches." Thus they prove a snare to the soul, and the occasion of forgetting God.

On the other hand, the more Christ enriches his people with his grace, the lower they are in their own eyes; they see themselves the more beholden to him; nor can they live without him, but desire to live upon him all their days. Once more,

6. They are "durable riches."

So they are styled by Solomon. The original word is sometimes rendered old; they have
have

have been of ancient date ; what the people of God have partaken of in every age, and still they are the same without any corruption, without any alloy. They are certain in their own nature, and continue when time shall be no more.

With respect to the riches of this world, nothing is more certain than their uncertainty ; and there are divers ways in which men may be deprived of them. But admitting that no accident, as we call it, happens, there is nothing so sure as the approach of death, and that will strip a man of his all at once ; for “ as we brought nothing into the world, it is “ certain we can carry nothing out.” What folly, as well as impiety, must there be in placing confidence in uncertain riches.

On the contrary, the riches which Christ bestows on his people are unperishing and eternal. Spiritual possessions are an absolute gift. When “ the world, and all the works that are “ therein shall be burnt up,” when all the riches of time shall be consumed in the general conflagration, not a mite of the heavenly treasures

tures shall be destroyed; for while Christ lives, these treasures are safe. To close,

1. You may know where your treasure is, by observing where your heart is.

So our Lord says, "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." If your greatest solicitude, and most familiar and frequent thoughts, your earnest desire and your chief delight, be carried out after earthly things, it is an evidence your portion lies in the world. If, on the other hand, your desires and affections be set on things above, if spiritual and everlasting objects are the matter of your highest choice, and give most joy to you, then your treasure is in heaven, where "Christ sits at the right hand of God."

2. From what has been said, we may learn, not to judge of men according to outward appearance.

Too many are ready to think, that because persons are poor, therefore they are miserable; whereas it is frequently the case, that they who

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are

are poor before men are rich towards God. Spiritual riches may be found in a cottage, while there may be nothing but real wretchedness in a palace. There are men who have had very slender advantages in education, whose extraction is low, whose circumstances are mean, and yet they may have good natural abilities, and an uncommon share of intellectual furniture; while, on the contrary, some men of high birth, that have considerable estates, and make a splendid show, may be all emptiness within. So in a religious view, a Lazarus may have his soul stored with celestial endowments, while a Dives is poor and wretched, blind and naked. So that we see, what little reason there is to fix our opinions of men according to the appearance they make in this world. Christ will not overlook the poor of his flock: he will take them into his arms, while the proud and haughty scorner he will trample under feet.

Lastly. God requires of them to whom he gives spiritual, as well as temporal riches, to improve them for the benefit of others.

It is indeed impossible that you can confer the least degree of grace ; and yet, as the apostle says, “ as poor, yet making others rich ; ” that is by being instruments of doing good, communicating knowledge of divine things, which instead of lessening, is the way to increase it. And as we read, “ Let no corrupt communication come out of your mouth, “ but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers,” or promote their spiritual advantage. We are to be rich in good words ; and, as we have opportunity, in good works. “ The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” Every man who has received the gifts, and so the graces of the Spirit, ought to aim at doing good thereby ; for they are given for edification.

1848

1. The first part of the book is devoted to a general introduction to the subject of the history of the world, and to a description of the various nations and peoples which have inhabited the globe from the earliest times to the present day.

2. The second part of the book is devoted to a detailed account of the history of the world, from the beginning of the Christian era to the present day. This part is divided into several volumes, each of which contains the history of a particular nation or people.

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THE PLEASURES OF A REAL CHRISTIAN.

S E R M O N XII.

PROVERBS III. 17.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

IN pursuance of a plan proposed in a foregoing discourse, to shew what those things are, which constitute the happiness of a real christian, I have considered two of them, namely, honour and riches. In order to perfect my design, I shall, in this discourse, set before you the remaining ingredient.

With respect to this life, it is sometimes the case, that pleasure is separated from dignity and wealth. A man may be raised to a post of honour, and may amass to himself great treasure,

and yet through afflictions of body, or anguish of mind, all his possessions may become insipid and tasteless.

Solomon tells us, "There is an evil which
 " I have seen under the sun, and it is com-
 " mon among men; a man to whom God has
 " given riches, and wealth, and honour; so
 " that he wants nothing for his soul of all that
 " he desires; yet God gives him not power to
 " eat thereof; but a stranger eats it. This is
 " vanity, and an evil disease." It is true, he
 is speaking of a niggardly sordid wretch, who
 has no heart to make a proper use of the gifts
 of Divine Providence; but it shews, that a
 man may be advanced in the world, and may
 be, at the same time, destitute of true comfort.
 On the contrary, in the Christian life, they
 whom the Lord honours with his friendship,
 and makes partakers of the true riches, have
 also an interest in that peace and pleasure
 which pass all understanding.

Whether we understand by the ways of wis-
 dom, the ways of Christ, or the ways of true
 godliness, it will come to the same thing; for
 there

there is no spiritual wisdom abstracted from the knowledge of him. The ways he has laid out and prescribed in his holy word are ways of pleasantness, and his paths, in which he would have us walk, are paths of peace.

Here I shall enquire, what are these ways and paths which are recommended? and then point out the comfort and satisfaction of soul to be had in walking in them.

FIRST, What are these ways and paths which are recommended?

It is common for the scripture to represent the course of a good man's life by his walking in the ways of God, which may be reduced to these two; the way of faith, and the way of holiness. We are bid to "stand in the ways," "and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein; and," it is added, "ye shall find rest to your soul." Though they are old paths, they are never the worse for being beaten; and to give them a full recommendation, they are as good as they are ancient: for having been trodden and tried by

the people of God in every age, they have been cordially approved. They are called the way of good men, and the paths of the righteous.

1. As to the way of faith, in this the people of God have walked in every generation.

It is said of the patriarchs, "These all died "in faith;" a proof that they lived in faith. And then the apostle describes both the object and the nature of it. The object of it, was "the "promises;" particularly the promise of eternal life, and of Christ the revealer and purchaser of it. As to the nature of it, it is described by their "seeing these promises afar off, being "persuaded of them, and embracing them." This was "believing with the heart unto "righteousness;" and in this way of faith all God's people have walked: they under the Old Testament, looking for a Saviour to come; and they under the New, looking to one already come. The apostle gives us Abraham as an example, whose faith we are to imitate. "He was the Father of circumcision to them "who are not of the circumcision only, but "also walk in the steps of that faith of our "Father

“ Father Abraham, which he had being yet
“ uncircumcised.” Faith is there described as
a way in which we are to walk. In all ages
there has been one and the same method of
justification. “ One Lord, one faith. The
“ righteousness of God, which is by faith of
“ Jesus Christ, is to all, and upon all them
“ that believe; for there is no difference.”

2. The way of holiness is that path which
Divine Wisdom has prescribed to us; and in
which true believers have walked in all genera-
tions.

It is said, “ An high-way shall be there,
“ and a way; and it shall be called the way of
“ holiness.” Having an holy principle in
them, whereby they are in measure restored to
the rectitude of their nature, they are therefore
fitted to walk in the way of God’s command-
ments. This is the matter of their choice. “ I
“ have chosen the way of thy precepts.” It is
what they desire to learn more and more.
“ Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes;
“ and I shall keep it unto the end.” It is that
in which they find freedom of soul. “ I will
“ walk

“ walk at liberty ; for I seek thy precepts.” And it is the way in which they delight. “ I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.” These several passages fully evince the esteem and love which the people of God have for the ways he has marked out for them. In a word, these ways and paths of wisdom include the whole compass of evangelical obedience, which is called the obedience of faith ; inasmuch as faith in Christ is the spring of it, and a spur to it.

That which I chiefly intend is to shew,

SECONDLY, That they who walk in the ways of Christ find peace and pleasure therein.

Many indeed vainly imagine, that if they become religious, they must lay aside all their pleasures. Religion and melancholy are the same thing in their account ; and satan is always ready to join issue with depraved nature in propagating this false opinion. Now, lest this should be the temptation of any young persons particularly, I would observe,

1. That

1. That you are not to form your judgment of wisdom's ways by the mournful complaints of any good people.

In the natural world there are cloudy and dark days; cold and uncomfortable seasons: and in the religious life the best of people may walk in darkness, and have no light. The Sun of Righteousness may be withdrawn, and the corruptions of the heart may cause great uneasiness and trouble. The body is not always in the same temper, nor the soul always in the same frame. Nevertheless,

2. The righteous in their lowest estate, in their worst frames, would not change condition with the ungodly in their highest prosperity.

They know the heart of a stranger; I mean, a stranger to the grace of God; they can pity and pray for him, but they would not for a thousand worlds be in his condition; for that would be like changing a palace for a prison, liberty for slavery, "to serve divers lusts and
"pleasures"

“pleasures” in a contrariety to the commands of God.

3. When the people of God are in a disconsolate frame of mind, it is not religion that makes them so, but the want of it in its proper exercise.

Sometimes it is the case, that humours in the body so prevail, as to becloud and darken the mind. This is an affliction common to good and bad. God exhorts the righteous to “re-
“joice evermore.” There is the same reason for joy in the Lord in adversity as in prosperity, for “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-
“day, and for ever.” The promise of God stands firm; his covenant is “ordered in all
“things, and sure.”

4. Religion does not abridge any man of that natural pleasure, which is taken with moderation, and which contributes to the health of the body, that so the soul may be fitted the better for the service of God.

They

They whose fear is taught by the precepts of men, may seclude themselves from the world, and live a monastic life, under pretence of greater mortification; but such a severity is condemned both by reason and scripture. Reason speaks, that man is formed for social connections. And the scripture says, "we are not to go out of the world," or withdraw from all converse with it. This is one extreme. Another is, when persons practically indulge an inordinate affection to, and immerse themselves in the things of the earth. There may be an unlawful use of lawful things. What may in itself conduce to answer a valuable end, may be perverted and abused through a mistaken judgment, or a corrupt bias. Eating, drinking, and recreating the body are natural means, which carry their own advantage with them; but nothing is more common, than for many persons to go into excesses, whereby both soul and body are greatly injured. Even Christ's disciples need the caution, "Take heed, lest at any time your heart be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." Yea, there is no sin committed
under

under the sun, but the most holy person needs to be warned against it; because if left to himself, he would commit it, even the sins of David and Peter; which demonstrates the necessity and benefit of exercising a godly jealousy over our hearts, and of applying to the throne of grace for spiritual strength.

5. Whatever pleasure is taken in sinful courses, will bring bitterness in the end.

It is a maxim with some, A short life, and a merry one. Short indeed, even at the longest; and it may be, much shorter than you think. "This night thy soul may be required of thee." But suppose it should be protracted a few years longer, what is the language of the heart? What is the tenor of the life? You may read it, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Go on in a voluptuous course; live as you please; but remember, it is at your peril. You must give
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an account before the impartial tribunal of Divine Justice; and then what will you do in the day of visitation?

Now there are divers kinds of pleasure, which I shall particularize, with a view to shew the excellency of the pleasures of religion.

(1.) There are natural pleasures.

We ought to take pleasure in the good things of this life, as the donations of Divine Providence. "Every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and has given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God." Solomon took a great deal of pleasure in "building houses, planting vineyards, making gardens and orchards, and in procuring the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts." He withheld not his heart from any joy; but when he came to reflect on all the work of his hand, he beheld, that, "all was vanity, and vexation of spirit."

(2.) There

(2.) There are epicurean pleasures, such as consist in the gratification of our bodily senses and appetites.

Even those pleasures which are natural, when they engross the heart, and are made idols, or are placed in the room of God, become sinful. Whatever worldly object it be, that the desires of the heart are supremely set upon, this is the idol to which we bow down. There are different degrees of desires in different men, and in the same man at different times. Some are all on the stretch in their pursuit of pleasure. They pant after it, and are uneasy till they obtain it. As duly as the day comes, they are projecting something, wherein to pass away their time, which hangs heavy on their hands; one while going into this, then into another scene of merriment.

Others appear to be more cool in their temper, more deliberate in their choice, who yet are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." Some are sunk in the depths of sensuality, who have "given themselves over to work all uncleanness with greediness. Whoredom
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wonderful, “and are sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.” And the farther these works are inspected, the more beauty and regularity, wisdom and order appear in them. And indeed, where there is an inclination to search into these things, there are objects enough to entertain us.

Much more is this applicable to the sacred scriptures, in which are revealed those truths that are sufficient to employ the mind of man to eternity; and are worthy his closest attention and warmest affection. Which leads me,

4. To consider those spiritual pleasures, which are peculiar to them who walk in wisdom's ways.

There is a “joy which a stranger intermeddles not with.” If a man's heart be not in his business, he can take no pleasure in it. An unwilling mind will soon beget an idle hand. Religion is the business of the soul; and if a man's heart be not in that, it is all drudgery; and so it will be, till a saving turn be given it by the invincible

vincible grace of God: Now the pleasures of religion may be called spiritual on several accounts.

It is the spirit of man that is the seat and subject of them. They are diffused through the soul.

Again. They are conversant about spiritual objects; things which are not seen, and which are eternal. The perfections of God, the person of Christ, the blessings of his purchase, with the glories of another world; things of this kind are the objects, with which these spiritual pleasures are connected.

Further. They spiritualize the soul in its dispositions, affections, and desires. The more peace and pleasure a good man experiences upon a gospel-foundation, the nearer is his heart raised towards heaven. He is the more disposed to the service of God, and his desires are carried out more abundantly after him.

Once more. The Spirit of God is the author of them. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy,
U 2 "peace."

“peace.” Whatever means he is pleased to make use of, there is not a degree more of this holy joy, or spiritual pleasure, in a real christian, than what proceeds from the Holy Spirit.

In order to set forth the excellence of spiritual pleasures, I shall shew,

What there is which causes pleasure to them who walk in the ways of wisdom. And then,

That this spiritual pleasure is infinitely preferable to all the delights of sense.

I. What there is in wisdom’s ways, that causes pleasure to them that walk therein.

David says, “In keeping thy commandments there is a great reward,” not *for*, but *in* keeping them. In the way of duty the children of God have ground to expect a great reward, for this reason, because it is the matter of a promise. “Great peace have they who love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.”

Every

Every true christian, one time or other, knows by experience, that there is peace and pleasure to be found in the ways of Christ. "I was glad," said the psalmist, "when they said to me, let us go up into the house of the Lord." It afforded him joy, when others called him to the duties of public worship. Such can bless God for the institution of a sabbath, as it is a day of rest, not merely from worldly labour, but a day of rest for the soul; a rest, which consists in drawing near to God, holding communion with him, and receiving blessings from him; and so is an earnest and type of that heavenly "rest, which remains for the people of God." There is a pleasure felt in singing the praises of God, in calling on his name, in reading and hearing his word, in waiting on Christ at his table, and in religious conversation. Also, in family and secret duties, there is a pleasure found and felt by those who conscientiously engage in them. But the question returns, what is the source of it, or whence does it arrive? I answer,

1. Spiritual pleasure flows from the presence of God.

When he draws near to his people, and says to their souls, "I am your salvation," then their darkness is dispersed, and the light of joy succeeds. It is a time of refreshing to the weary soul.

2. Holy joy is caused by the special manifestations of Christ to the soul.

It is a pleasure to them who are convinced of their sin and misery, that there is a Saviour provided and set forth in the gospel, as one able and suitable. These are good tidings of great joy. And when faith is in exercise upon him who made atonement for sin, and "brought in an everlasting righteousness, and makes intercession for transgressors;" when these things are set home and viewed in a way of believing, they cannot fail to produce a pleasure which the world knows not. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." I may add, under this head, there is a pleasure in mourning for sin; for there is no evangelical repentance without "looking to him whom we
" have

“have pierced.” A godly sorrow, and an holy joy are very consistent in christian experience.

3. Spiritual pleasure arises from the witness of the Holy Spirit.

When he is pleased to shine on the soul, and speak peace, who then can give trouble? It is he that makes the change he has wrought evident to ourselves; whereby we see, he has done that for us which thousands are ignorant of.

Our old divines were used to make this comparison. On a sun-dial there are all the figures which represent the hours of the day; but we cannot tell what time it is, unless the sun shines. So in a believer there are the graces of the Spirit; but unless he is pleased to shine on his own work, we are not able to know our state towards God. “The Spirit witnesses,” sooner or later, “with our spirits, that we are the children of God.” This leads me to observe,

II. That those spiritual pleasures, which are found in the ways of God, infinitely exceed all the delights of sense and time. They are of a more exalted nature, and the effects of them differ as widely as heaven and earth.

1. Spiritual pleasures elevate and ennoble the soul.

They refine it, as it were from earth and dross, by carrying it upwards to heavenly objects; whereas mere sensual gratifications debase and dishonour our powers. They sink the dignity of man, and make him like the beasts that perish.

2. Spiritual pleasures prepare the heart for further waiting upon God in his ordinances.

They leave an appetite in the soul after fresh provision. Instead of wishing the duty over, its return is desired; and is it not far better to be left longing than loathing? Mere sensual delights deaden the soul, blunt its edge, and render it very unfit for the duty that is incumbent upon us.

3. Spiritual

3. Spiritual pleasures are substantial and satisfying.

They carry importance and weight with them. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thine house, and thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures." On the other hand, the soul is never truly satisfied with earthly delights. There may be a surfeit, where there is no satisfaction; the reason is, because the lusts of men are boundless; they are continually seeking, and find none. It is in Christ and his ways there is rest for the soul, and not in the creature.

4. Spiritual pleasure will bear a review and a reflection.

The very remembrance of having had communion with God is pleasing and grateful; whereas the pleasures of sin leave a sting behind them. "What fruit had ye in those things, which ye are now ashamed of, the end whereof is death?" They first deceive, and then destroy the soul. Once more,

5. Spiritual

5. Spiritual pleasures are the foretastes of heaven, and run parallel with eternity.

“ In thy presence there is fulness of joy, and
 “ at thy right hand there are pleasures for ever-
 “ more.” On the contrary, the pleasures of
 this world are but for a season; all are over at
 death; and then to the worldling there will
 follow nothing but “ weeping, and wailing,
 “ and gnashing of teeth.” Our Lord said to
 his disciples, “ Ye shall weep and lament, but
 “ the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be for-
 “ rowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into
 “ joy.” These contraries are represented in
 the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.
 Abraham said to the former, “ Remember, that
 “ thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good
 “ things, and likewise Lazarus evil things;
 “ but now he is comforted, and thou art tor-
 “ mented.” Upon the whole,

1. Here is great reason for the ungodly and
 the sinner to mourn. “ Rejoice not for joy,
 “ O Israel, for thou hast gone a whoring from
 “ thy God.”

2. Let

2. Let us watch against every sin, as it is that which dishonours God, and mars the peace and pleasure of the soul. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." Would you have serenity and pleasure within? then walk in the ways of Christ. Let your hope be founded on him, and your expectation be from him. "Rejoice in him, and have no confidence in the flesh."

THE LOVE OF CHRIST,

SERMON XIII.

GALATIANS II. 20.

—*The Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

EVERY one who is conversant with the writings of the apostle Paul, cannot but observe, that his constant aim is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of sinners, and the object of faith. Being made a monument of his victorious grace, he takes all opportunities of “shewing forth the praises of “him who had called him out of darkness into “marvellous light.” As one who was “not “ashamed of the gospel,” nor of his hope arising from it, he proclaims aloud, in the verse from which the text is taken, his entire and absolute dependence upon Christ. So near was the concern he had with him, that he
says,

says, "I am crucified with Christ." Some understand by this expression, that the apostle was so taken up with contemplations on him, as one who died on the cross, that it was to him, as if he were crucified with him. Others more properly connect the words with the preceding verse, where he says, "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God;" the meaning of which is, that having given up all expectations of being justified by the works of the law, I place my whole confidence for acceptance with God in a crucified Saviour. The expression is of the same import with another, which the apostle uses in his epistle to the Romans: "Ye are become dead to the law;" that is, as a covenant of works, "by the body of Christ," or by his sacrifice on the cross. Believers are said in scripture to be "dead with Christ," to be "buried with him," and to be "risen with him," which denotes thus much, that he was their public head and representative, and that they derive all their happiness from him.

There is another expression, with which these words may be compared. "Our old man is crucified"

"cified

“cified with Christ, that the body of sin might
“be destroyed, that henceforth we might not
“serve sin.” The mortification of sin in
believers is a work both gradual and painful,
and is carried on by the power and efficacy of
the death of Christ through the instrumen-
tality of faith. “Nevertheless,” says the apos-
tle, “I live” a spiritual life; “yet not I, but
“Christ liveth in me;” it is not owing to any
power or principle naturally found in me, but
by virtue of union with Christ, that I live a
life both of justification and of sanctification.
“And the life which I now live in the flesh, I
“live by the faith of the Son of God.” Dur-
ing my abode in this mortal body, instead of
living according to the inclinations of the flesh,
I live in a dependence on the Son of God, go-
ing out of myself to him for the supply of all
my spiritual wants. And then follow the
words of the text: “Who loved me, and gave
“himself for me.” This is a subject never
out of season for a christian to take into his
meditations, and is peculiarly adapted to the
Lord’s supper, in which the love and under-
taking of our dear Redeemer are to be solem-
nized.

In discoursing on these words, I shall consider,

FIRST, The dignity of the person held up to our view; the Son of God.

SECONDLY, What that love is, which he bears to his people.

THIRDLY, The expression and evidence of it in the gift of himself; and,

FOURTHLY, The appropriating act of faith, with which the apostle was favoured. "He loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*."

FIRST, The dignity of the person of Christ is held up to our view; the Son of God.

It is necessary to exercise our thoughts on this head; because in proportion to our conception of his person, will be our esteem and value for his love. Supposing that it had been declared from heaven concerning one of the holy angels, that he loved a sinful man so as to be willing to become incarnate, and to die for him; though it would not have been sufficient for
our

our redemption, yet it would have been an act of great kindness. But here is the Son of God himself, “the brightness of his” Father’s “glory, and the express image of his person, “who upholds all things by the word of his “power;” he engages “by himself to purge “our sins.” Having almighty power and infinite merit, he needs no assistance from another. Now concerning this title, “Son of “God,”

1. It must denote much more than his title, the son of man.

When he put the question to the pharisees, “What think ye of Christ? Whose son is “he?” They readily answered, “the son of “David.” And in “the book of his genera- “tion,” he is called also, “the son of Abra- “ham.” But his more familiar and usual title, in the days of his flesh, was the son of man. And that which rendered it both mysterious and peculiar was this, that he was no man’s son; for he did not descend from Adam by ordinary generation. The title sets forth

the reality of his human nature ; that he was a partaker of a true body and a reasonable soul, “ the man Christ Jesus.”

2. When he is called the Son of God, it does not, in my opinion, refer to him as Mediator.

His sonship and his office are two distinct things ; and the one is mentioned in scripture as prior to the other. When it is said, that “ God sent forth his Son into the world,” it shews, that he was a Son before his mission. And particularly when the apostle says, “ though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered ;” it teaches us to consider him as one who condescended to execute his office. “ Though he were a Son” cannot mean, *though he were a Mediator* ; for in his mediatorial office he obeyed and suffered. As Son of God, he cannot therefore be the servant of God, It follows,

3. That he is the Son of God in a sense, in which none can be compared with him.

Real

Real christians are the sons of God by regeneration and adoption. Adam was the son of God by creation. The angels, though of an higher order, are sons after the same manner. But when the apostle speaks of Christ, he informs us, that none of them could be likened unto him under that character. "For
" to which of the angels said he at any time,
" Thou art my son, this day have I begotten
" thee? But unto the Son he saith, Thy
" throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Nothing can be more evident, than that the term *begotten* cannot signify the same as *created*, because Christ is styled the only begotten Son of God, but he was not the only created son of God. I acknowledge, that in speaking of this momentous doctrine, we must deliver our thoughts more in a negative than in a positive form. We can tell what God is not, better than what he is. The same we may say of his eternal Son. "What is his name, and what
" is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?" Hence it appears,

4. That when he is called the Son of God, it evinces the verity of his divine nature.

As the title of Father is a title not of office, but of nature, so is that of Son. If he has a nature above the human, it cannot be an angelic one, but one strictly and properly divine. And if it be strictly and properly divine, he must be on an equality with his Father. Thus the Jews understood him, when he called God his own Father. "They sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken he sabbath," as they thought, "but said also, that God was his Father," *his own, proper Father*, making himself equal with God. They imagined, he was guilty of blasphemy, for assuming such an equality; and so he would have been, if it had been more than his due.

This title then of Son of God leads us to entertain the most exalted conceptions of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently shews us the amazing greatness of that love, with which the apostle was so deeply affected. It is the love, not of a mere creature; no, not the highest that ever was produced by the power of God; but of one who is infinite in his perfections. This doctrine of the deity of the Son of God is of such special use, and high

high importance in the christian scheme, that it is the life and soul of it. It puts an efficacy into all his obedience and sufferings, making his obedience the ground of our acceptance with God, and his sufferings the meritorious cause of our pardon and deliverance from condemnation; and making both that complete and everlasting righteousness, by which all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.

It is also to be considered as a doctrine, that lies at the foundation of all experimental and practical religion. If he had not been a divine person, as he could not have satisfied the justice of God, so neither could he have obtained salvation for sinful men. But “great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh.” It is a mystery, and therefore cannot be fully comprehended by a finite mind. It is a mystery of godliness, for real religion is erected on it, and promoted by it. I say then to you, my friends, in the language of the apostle Peter, “I will not neglect to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established

“ in the present truth ; knowing that shortly I
 “ must put off this my tabernacle, I will en-
 “ deavour that you may be able, after my de-
 “ cease, to have these things always in remem-
 “ brance.” I shall now enquire,

SECONDLY, What that love is, which this adorable person, the Son of God, bears to his people. The apostle says of him, “ who loved
 “ me.”

We read of the love of Christ in different views. It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish on this head. As man, he was possessed of a human love. We are told concerning the young ruler, who came to our Lord with this question, “ What shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life ?” that “ Jesus beholding
 “ him loved him.” He was pleased with those amiable qualities which appeared in him. It was a merely human affection in our Lord. At the same time, in a higher sense, this worldling could not but be the object of Christ’s indignation, because he loved the world more than him, and therefore was not worthy of him. How different was that love which

our Lord discovered to his disciples, concerning whom it is said, that "having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end;" and that, with which "he loved his church, so as to give himself for it."

This love, therefore, which we are now to contemplate, is altogether divine love. Observe,

1. Its immensity.

Such is the nature of the love of Christ, that it is not in the power of angels to take its dimensions. It is measured, if I may so say, only by the love which the Father bears to the Son. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." Not that the one is in all respects equal to the other; but it bears some proportion; so that, as it is impossible for us fully to conceive of the love of the Father to Christ as Mediator, so of the love of the Son to the most unworthy creatures. The apostle speaks of it, when he prays for the Ephesians, "that they might be able to comprehend

“prehend with all saints, what is the breadth,
“and length, and depth and height, and to
“know the love of Christ, which passeth
“knowledge.” To comprehend, in this place
does not signify, adequately to take it in; for
a created understanding cannot be equal to
that which is uncreated. As soon might the
ocean be poured into a shell. The word is, in
other passages, rendered, to apprehend. Real
christians have some understanding of it in an
experimental way, and are, at times, affected
with the consideration of its breadth, that it
extends to gentiles as well as jews; of its
length, that it reaches from eternity to eter-
nity; of its depth, that it brought the Son of
God to the lowest state of misery, to deliver
sinners from the wrath to come; and of its
height, that it advances them to all the ho-
nours and dignities of heaven in the immediate
presence of God. Some have explained the
dimensions of this love thus. For the breadth
of it, it extends to all ranks of men; it reaches
all the cares and wants of the soul; the tempt-
ed, the deserted, the backsliding, the perfe-
cuted; it extends to the pardon of all sins
truly repented of. For the length of it, it is

to

to the utmost extent of the purposes of God, and our prayers, faith, and hope. For the depth of it, think of the torments of hell, and of those torments, which Christ endured in his soul to deliver us thence. And for the height of it, Christ never leaves the soul he loves, till he has conducted it to heaven.

Now concerning this love of God our Saviour, it is said to pass knowledge; and yet there is such a thing as knowing it. It is like that "peace of God, which," in another place, is said "to pass all understanding;" the understanding of angels and men. Nevertheless, it is in some degree known, so as to be felt and tasted. The love of one friend towards another may be intense, but the love of God to his people is immense. If all the love found in the creation, both in earth and in heaven, were drawn to a point, it would be but a shadow of this incomparable, and infinite love of Christ. Consider,

2. The antiquity of this love.

The

The scriptures have in divers places set forth the transactions, which passed between the Father and the Son, concerning the salvation of fallen man. As the love of the Father was from eternity, so was that of the Son. Does the Father say, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love?" The Son is represented, as "rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights are said to be with the sons of men." "He was set up" as Mediator "from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." A people were then given to him to be redeemed; and "grace was given to them in Christ Jesus before the world began." So that when he undertook to become their Saviour, he fixed his love upon them. It is a love which bears date from eternity.

3. The love of Christ takes its rise from his own heart.

This is evident, if we consider, what was the condition of Adam's posterity. There was nothing excellent found in them; nothing done by

by them worthy to attract his special love. On the contrary, all had sinned, and by sin were fallen into a state of guilt and pollution, bondage and extreme misery. There was then every thing in human nature, that had a tendency to excite his abhorrence. What could he see in a company of rebels and enemies, to draw forth his heart towards them? He had no need of them, and would have been infinitely blessed and glorious without them for ever. Take for an example the apostle Paul, who was persuaded of the love of Christ towards him. And wherefore did he thus regard him? It was not because there was something naturally good in his temper and conduct; for when he speaks of himself, he sets forth his depraved state in its odious colours. "I was
" a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious;
" but I obtained mercy, because I did it igno-
" rantly in unbelief;" not that his ignorance and unbelief are mentioned as the reason of his obtaining mercy; but the meaning is, he was a subject capable of mercy, because he had not committed the unpardonable sin. And then, in the next verse, he admires and adores the supreme cause of his salvation. "The
" grace

“ grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant
“ with faith and love, which is in Christ Je-
“ sus.” He plainly saw, that this grace, this
love was self moved; and he mentions it for
the encouragement of others, who behold
themselves guilty, vile, and wretched. Let
none despair of mercy, when such an one as
Saul of Tarsus, the chief of sinners, was called
by grace.

Now though none here present may have
been suffered to go to such a length in ini-
quity, yet those of you who know the love of
Christ, are assured that it is not caused by
worthiness that is in you. God says of the
people of Israel, that “ he did not set his love
“ upon them, because they were more or
“ mightier than others, but because he loved
“ them.” And our Lord said to his disciples,
“ Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen
“ you.” “ Thou wast in thy blood, when he
“ said unto thee, live. And when he passed by
“ thee, and looked upon thee, behold thy time
“ was a time of love,” free on his part, and
unmerited on thine.

4. It is love, which is peculiar and distinguishing in its objects.

When the apostle says, "he loved *me*," it carries with it the idea of distinction. And indeed it would have afforded him no consolation, to have been regarded by Christ in a manner not different from them who die in their sins. But he speaks of a peculiarity in his love. Our Lord, if he had thought fit, might have set his love on the human race, and prevented the destruction of every one. On the other hand, he might have left all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery, into which they had brought themselves, and have made the fallen angels the objects of his favour. But "he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy." "Christ loved the church," we are told, "and gave himself for it." By the church, must be understood a certain number of mankind in distinction from all others, called "the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven." Were it not for this distinction, how could any believers say with holy admiration, "Lord, how

“ is it, that thou wilt manifest thyself to us,
 “ and not unto the world ?”

5. It is a love without change, and without end.

Some have been so rude in their speech, as to say, that for Christ to love the same persons at all times, is the effect of a blind fondness for them. Such persons should consider, that they compare the love of God our Redeemer with the affection of a frail, sinful creature. A creature's affection is, like himself, mutable ; but the love of the Son of God must be, like himself, immutable. It is true ; even where he bears the greatest complacency, he expresses also a paternal displeasure. He cannot love the faults and follies, the sins and provocations of his own peculiar people. So far from it, they are more aggravated, and more displeasing to him, than the iniquities of others ; and a variety of ways he takes to testify his holy anger. But “ though he will visit their iniquities with a rod, and their transgressions “ with stripes, his loving-kindness he will not
 “ utterly

“utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail.” Peter was permitted to fall; but he rose again, for “the Lord turned and looked upon him;” and that was a look of love. Once more,

6. The love of the Son of God is fruitful, operative, and efficacious.

One christian may love another, and yet may not be capable of giving him the assistance which is required in a time of necessity. Indeed, wherever there is a genuine affection, it will not lie dormant and inactive, but on proper occasions it will be exerted. To whatever lengths human love may be carried, it is not to be brought in competition with the love of Christ, which has been demonstrated in doing the greatest acts of kindness, and which is ready to break through the strongest opposition, to relieve and help its objects. This leads me to consider,

THIRDLY, That wonderful expression and evidence of the love of Christ; the gift of himself.

“He

“He loved me,” says the apostle, “and gave himself for me.” Never can love be carried higher; for no greater gift could ever be given. The word is the same which is used, when applied to the act of God the Father concerning Christ; “he was *delivered* for our offences,” given up in a judicial manner. In many other passages Christ is styled the gift of God; but in our text he is spoken of as one who gave himself. This supposes,

1. That he became incarnate.

He that was in the “beginning with God, and was God, was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” The human nature which sinned, he assumed into a personal union with the divine. There was, however, no contagion upon it, for “he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” Yet he was sent “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” that the nature which had sinned might suffer. This expression, that he gave himself, informs us,

2. That he was Lord of himself.

As he was entirely free, whether he would dwell with men upon earth, so the life that he lived was absolutely his own property. "No man," said he, "taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." But herein his love appeared, that he gave his life a ransom for many."

3. His giving himself contains in it the surrender he made of himself as a sacrifice in the room of sinners.

Under the law the priests and the sacrifices were distinct things; but herein the antitype excels; for Christ offered himself. And indeed, if he had presented any thing besides, it would not have proved an equivalent.

It is necessary to observe, that in order to his being a sacrifice for sin, he must be found in the place of sinners; not personally guilty, but as having sin imputed to him; which is the meaning of those expressions, "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was made sin for us, who knew no sin." He
Y voluntarily

voluntarily presented himself, his soul and body, as a sin-offering to the Divine Justice in the room of the guilty. When it is said in the text, "he gave himself for me," and in other places, "he laid down his life for us," it cannot signify merely, that he died to free us from some evil, and to procure us some benefit; which is all the sense given by some commentators. But the apostle leads our thoughts to a proper substitution; not for our good merely, but in our stead, denoting a vicarious punishment which our Lord suffered. Here then is love to be admired to eternity, that the Son of God in human nature should give himself an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling favour.

One thing more is to be observed, and that is,

FOURTHLY, The appropriating sense of the love of Christ, with which the apostle was favoured.

He was not only assured of the truth of the doctrine, that "Christ loved the church, and
" gave

“gave himself for it;” but he was assured of the application of it to himself. Here I shall just mention,

1. That such a personal persuasion of our interest in Christ is not essential to faith.

It is impossible to recommend what some good men have said on this subject. Their notion of faith is, that it is an assurance of God’s love to me, or that Christ gave himself for me; and yet they will speak of doubting believers. But if faith and assurance be the same thing, then to doubt is to lose all faith, and become an unbeliever. Whereas our Lord said to Peter, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” He had true faith, though it was but small. Many partake of “a good hope through grace,” who are not arrived yet, and perhaps never may in this life attain to a settled persuasion of their interest in the love and death of Christ. Nevertheless,

2. Assurance is an attainable privilege.

This is evident from a great variety of passages. Not only was this the experience of the apostles ; it was enjoyed by many in the primitive times. The reason why it is not so common among believers now as it was then, is because there is so much conformity to the world. And the more there is of that temper and conduct, the less is the heart disposed to seek the things that are above. Another reason is, because the duties of self-examination and meditation are so greatly neglected. Some who once experienced this privilege of knowing their interest in Christ, are now at a loss and in doubt concerning it, and are ready to fear, that they have deceived themselves ; while there are others, who go on their way, “ rejoicing in Christ, and having no confidence in the flesh.”

Such a comfortable persuasion is certainly desirable, and ought to be endeavoured after. If there are any of you, my friends, who are desirous of knowing whether the Son of God has loved you, and given himself for you, I would attempt to resolve it by asking,

(1.) Do

(1.) Do you love him ?

You will think with pleasure on him. Your desires will be to his name, and the remembrance of him. And you will mourn his absence, as your greatest affliction. If you have a sincere and cordial love to him, there is no reason to doubt of his love to you ; for your's is but a spark of his own kindling. Again,

(2.) Have you given yourself to him ?

If so, it is a sure token, that he gave himself for you. In all things he ought to have the pre-eminence. And if you are enabled to prefer him, so as to adore his person, to admire his condescension, to trust in his righteousness, and to walk in his ways, thus making a surrender of yourself to the Lord, you may conclude, that he gave himself for you. Unspeakably miserable are they, who care for none of these things, who are indifferent to Christ, and negligent of their own salvation. But unspeakably happy are they, who have a part and portion in him.

This is a subject that affords matter for suitable meditation at the Lord's table.* There the love of Christ is in a particular manner revealed in giving himself up to the shameful and painful death of the cross. And there we ought to exercise our thoughts upon it, as it was fixed on such undeserving objects as we are. And if the Holy Spirit shed this love in our hearts, we shall then join in that doxology, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion for ever and ever." Amen.

* This sermon was preached on a sacramental occasion.

THE DUTY OF SELF-DEDICATION.

SERMON XIV.*

PROV. XXIII. 26—

My son give me thine heart—

WERE we to look back, and take a view of the benefits which the Lord conferred on us the year past, our deliverances and comforts, how numerous and various would they appear! Our wants may have been very pressing, our afflictions painful and grievous. Nevertheless, “he has granted us” not only “life,” but “favour, and his visitation hath preserved our spirits.” Through whatever channel our mercies flow, God is the spring. We are indebted to him as the supreme cause, and therefore ought to keep up a sense of our obligations. This being the case, it is incum-

* This sermon was preached, chiefly to the young, Jan. 1, 1775.

bent on us to enquire, what returns we have made. The scripture enjoins it on children, not only to honour and obey their parents, but also to requite them; that is, that they do their utmost to make them amends for their care, their kindness, and their expence, in bringing them up. What acknowledgments then must be due to our Father in heaven, for the bounties and blessings, which he hath conferred on us, from our birth to this day without intermission! It is indeed impossible to make him recompence. Yet, as he has granted us all we possess, what less can we render and surrender to him, than that which he requires in the passage I have read, "My son give me thine heart."

We are to take these words as spoken, not merely by Solomon, but by the Lord himself. And the manner in which he speaks carries with it both love and authority. I shall consider the passage, as the injunction which God our heavenly Father delivers to all who make a profession of his name. It is as if he had said, "Do you call me your Father? Then seeing you account yourselves my children, I have
" this

“ this equitable demand upon each of you :
“ my son, my daughter, give me thine heart.”
In treating on the passage, I shall observe,

FIRST, What it is which the Lord claims ;
the heart.

SECONDLY, Upon what foundation his
claim is built, or what right and authority he
has to demand it. More particularly,

THIRDLY, What is comprehended in our
giving the heart unto him. And,

FOURTHLY, The manner and time in which
this is to be done.

FIRST, What it is which the Lord claims ;
the heart.

He might have said, “ Give me thy sub-
“ stance.” And, indeed, this he does call for
in other passages of scripture. “ Honour the
“ Lord with thy substance, and with the first
“ fruits of all thine increase.” It is true, he
does

does not need it for himself. But there is a necessity, that his gospel, and his interest, and his poor people be supported by it. And what is done for that purpose, he reckons as done to himself. He might have said, "Give me thy time." And thus he does in effect say in other places, where we are commanded to "redeem the time, because the days are evil." It is not to be wasted in idleness and sinful gratifications, but laid out and improved for his service and glory, in our particular callings and stations. He might have said, "Give me thy dearest relatives and comforts." And these also in effect he requires, when he commands us to "hate father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters," in comparison of him. He ordered Abraham to surrender his beloved son Isaac, to part with him as a devoted sacrifice. The Lord intended it to be a trial of his faith. The patriarch being fully persuaded it was a revelation from heaven, made no hesitation. An example to us, willingly to resign our dearest earthly comforts, whenever God in his providence calls them from us. Farther, the Lord might have said,
"Give

“ Give me thine own life.” And so he does.
“ If any man come to me, and hate not his
“ own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”

But here, in the text, he says, “ Give me
“ thine heart.” Surely this includes every
thing. For if we give him this, we consecrate
to him our substance, be it little or much, our
time, our comforts, and our life. My mean-
ing is, we shall be willing, that every thing we
are and have, be at his disposal, and be put to
the use for which it was designed.

Now when the Lord requires the heart, or
the soul, it cannot be to the exclusion of the
body, any more than when we are commanded
“ to present our bodies to him,” it is to the
exclusion of our souls. So that the claim he
has, is to our whole selves. Resign to me
thine understanding, judgment, and consci-
ence ; thy memory, will, and affections. Give
me thy desires and inclinations ; thy trust,
love, and delight. Give me thine eyes, thy
tongue, thine hands, and feet. Or, as the apos-
tle says, “ Yield yourselves to God, and your
“ members as instruments of righteousness un-
“ to

“to him.” We are not to withhold any power or faculty from him. Well then, let us seriously think of this matter as of the highest moment, that our religious profession in the account of God passes for nothing, unless the heart be given to him. “Be not deceived, God will not be mocked.” What is friendship among men, if sincerity and fidelity be not the ground of it? And what avail the religious duties we perform, if the heart be not devoted to God? Of how many may that complaint of old be made now, “This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me.” And how dreadful is that denunciation, “Curst be the deceiver, who hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing.”

We come this day to the worship of God, and he requires the soul in every part of that worship. Singing his praise, calling on his name, hearing his word, and approaching his table; what is all this but bodily exercise; a mere carcase, unless the heart be employed?

It

It is one thing to have impertinent thoughts enter the mind, which a trifling incident may sometimes occasion ; and another thing to allow and indulge such thoughts. If the heart be wanting, the profession is empty. To present the body without the soul, is, as one observes, to offer to God a skin for a sacrifice, a thing unworthy his infinite Majesty. Yea, it is, as the prophet Hosea says, “ compassing God about with lies.” Without the heart the tongue is a liar ; and the greatest zeal dissembling with God. Let us seriously think on this matter, that as the Lord calls for the heart, it is reasonable that we give it him. Whether you be in the prime of life, or in advanced years, hearken to his voice ; and be assured, that it is the voice of a father and a friend, and not of an enemy.

SECONDLY, Upon what foundation doth the Lord claim the heart ? Or, what right and authority has he to require it ?

The heart or soul of man, which in Paradise was the temple of God, the seat of his presence,

presence, and wholly devoted to his service, is, by the fall, become the receptacle of every thing that is vile, noxious, and polluted. It is alienated from him. But, because of its native dignity and immortality, many put in a claim to it. The flesh, satan, and the world have their several pretensions: and however opposite they may seem to each other, yet they are all confederate in this point. It may be illustrated by what we read in Psalm lxxxiii. where there is an account of many nations, whose interests clash with each other, and yet, every one joined in a league to seize the Israel of God. The aim and intention of sin, satan, and the world, is to get possession of the soul, that they may make it their prey. But amidst these contenders, the Lord himself steps in with his challenge. The demand which he makes is legal. His right and title are founded upon equity. He can say, what none of his competitors can, and he speaks the language of an absolute sovereign, "Behold, all souls are mine: as the soul of the Father, so also the soul of the son is mine." And the ground of this claim is,

That

That he is our Maker. Being the Father of our spirits, and the former of our bodies, therefore he must be our owner. On this footing he has the supreme, and indeed the sole authority to claim us. Being the objects of his creating power, we are therefore his property.

Another thing which gives him a right and title to be our possessor, is his providential care and goodness. We may say with David, “By thee have I been holden up from the womb. Thou art he that took me out of my mother’s bowels ; my praise shall be continually of thee.” Notwithstanding the solicitude of parents and friends in the younger part of life, it was the Lord himself who supported and guarded us in the various dangers and disasters to which we were exposed, and opened his hands to supply our numerous wants. Every thing that tends to preserve life, and render it comfortable, proceeds from him, the source and fountain.

Seeing then, that we can call nothing our own with respect to God, what can be more evident,

evident, than that he has an unalienable title to us? And upon this ground he may justly say, "Give me thine heart."

Above all, he has a peculiar interest in the objects of redeeming love and regenerating grace. And therefore the apostle says, "What, know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you, which ye have of God? And ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." He has a special claim to such persons; and this is the foundation of it, "the Lord Jesus gave himself for them," and gives himself to them. He redeemed them out of the hands of their enemies, and makes himself over to them in an everlasting covenant. Upon all these accounts we are bound to give ourselves to him. I proceed more particularly to shew,

THIRDLY, What is implied in the giving of our hearts, or whole selves to the Lord. These two things are to be premised:

1. That

1. That naturally we are revolters from God, and withhold from him that which is his due.

“We have all gone astray, like lost sheep, and every one has hastened to his own way.” The original apostacy is universal. What is said of mystical Babylon, is applicable to our whole nature, “It is fallen, it is fallen.” The word is doubled, to assure us of the thing; it is repeated, to inform us of the greatness of the fall. And it may also admit of this construction, fallen from God by sin, and fallen into ruin and misery. That charge belongs to us all as sinners. “This people have a revolting and rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.” So that when the Lord calls us by his word “to return to him,” we answer, in the pride and stoutness of our hearts, “We have loved idols, and after them we will go.”

Is it not an act of dishonesty among men, to refuse to deliver up another's property, when it is legally required? Such dishonesty are we all chargeable with towards God. He requires

our hearts, but we unjustly detain them. And that which is an aggravation of our crime is, we give them into the hand of an implacable enemy. Is not the greatest injustice committed, when a wife treacherously departs from her husband? Such injustice are we chargeable with, by dealing thus treacherously with God. The idolatry of the jews is represented as spiritual adultery, and therefore the Lord says thus to them, "Thou hast discovered thyself to another than me, and art gone up." The heart of an adulteress being alienated from her husband is given to another. So by giving our hearts away from God to the world, we are guilty of spiritual adultery. And to such are those words directed, "ye adulterers and adulteresses;" ye who have departed from God, and prefer the profits and pleasures of the world before him; "know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." This being the case, and the character of us all by nature, is it not astonishing goodness in God, that notwithstanding such perfidy and ingratitude, he calls to us to "give him the heart?"

“heart?” “Thou hast played the harlot
“with many lovers; yet return again to me,
“faith the Lord.” We may say here, as it is
said in another instance, “This is not the
“manner of men, O Lord God!”

2. In order to the giving of ourselves to the Lord, it is necessary, that our understandings be enlightened by him, and our wills inclined to him.

It is our great mercy, that the ministry of the word is from year to year continued among us, whereby we are instructed, cautioned, and admonished. But observation and experience awfully testify the blindness and perverseness of human nature. If you know, in a spiritual sense, any thing of yourself, you are sensible of the necessity of the enlightening and renewing influence of the Holy Spirit, to accompany the word; that when the Lord says, “Give me
“thine heart,” he would shew you, that it is your indispensable duty, and excite you to the performance of it. “His people are a willing
“people only in the day of his power.” When he is going to make the call effectual, it is the

birth of his promise, and the fruit of his grace. Agreeable to what the Lord says, "Thou shalt not play the harlot," thou shalt no longer depart from me, "and thou shalt not be for another man, so will I also be for thee;" that is, thou shalt return to me in a way of duty, and I will return to thee in a way of mercy.

But, more particularly, in giving the heart to the Lord, the following things are included,

1. That we acknowledge his right and title to us.

Time was, when we practically said, "Our lips and our lives are our own; who is Lord over us?" But, by his power and grace, we are fully convinced, that he has an unquestionable claim to us. We believe, and are sure, on the most solid and rational grounds, that we are his property, and not our own; that having a property in us, he has therefore dominion over us. By giving him the heart, we do not convey or transfer a right to him, but only acknowledge that right; that his sovereignty

reignty over us is reasonable and just. We may say here, as David did in another case, "Of thine own have we given thee." Well then, as we are to "render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's," so we are to "render to God the things that are God's." God is the Lord of conscience, the Lord of the soul; and therefore we are to render or restore it to him.

2. In giving the heart to God, it is implied, that we disown and forsake every rival, every competitor.

It is impossible that we can serve both God and Mammon. We cannot, properly speaking, divide the heart between him and the world. He will have the whole or none. By renouncing the world, is not meant a going out of it. Men may live a monastic and most reclusive life, and yet be under the power of a carnal mind. To renounce the world, is to forego an inordinate affection and attachment to it; and to forsake sin, is to hate it, and avoid temptations to it. Now, if you have given your heart to the Lord, you know the meaning of these words experimentally: "Other

“ lords beside thee have had dominion over us,
 “ but by thee only will we make mention of
 “ thy name.” We will discard, through aid
 of thy special grace, all confidence in the flesh,
 and make the Lord alone our trust.

3. To give the heart to the Lord, is to consent
 to be under his government, willing to accept
 him as our ruler, that he have the throne, or
 chief place within us.

It is to set your love upon him supremely,
 to prefer him to all other objects. “ Whom
 “ have I in heaven but thee, and there is none
 “ upon earth that I desire besides thee.” It is
 the same as avouching the Lord to be your
 God; Father, Son, and Spirit to be your co-
 venant God, your Father, your Redeemer, and
 your Sanctifier. He is chosen and accepted by
 you as your Sovereign, as well as your Saviour.

4. To give him your heart, is to submit to
 his prescriptive and providential will.

Implicit faith, and unlimited obedience, no
 creature has authority to demand. But God
 has

has a right to both. He has revealed nothing in his word but what is agreeable to his own perfection. Whatever doctrine he publishes, is to be received as true; and whatever duty he enjoins, is to be performed as good. To give him the heart, is to resign ourselves to his conduct, to be willing to be saved in his own way, and willing to be disposed of in providence as he thinks fit. And whatever trials and afflictions we may be called to endure, and whatever duties and services we may be required to perform, this is the language of our souls, "Here are we; do with us what seems good in thy sight; give us ability, and we will do thy will." I come,

FOURTHLY, To consider the manner and the time, in which we are to give the heart to the Lord.

1: As to the manner in which we are to do it.

Your heart must be given to him with a believing regard to Christ for acceptance. If

we be accepted of God, as to either our persons or services, it is only in Christ the beloved. When the Lord therefore says, "Give me thy heart," the answer should be, Lord, I am guilty and polluted in thy sight. I am unholy and unworthy to come unto thee. I have nothing of my own to recommend me. But, in the name of the Lord Jesus, I here present my all to thee. Receive me graciously for his sake. Again,

The heart must be given to him wholly. The Lord does not call for a divided heart; it is for the whole of ourselves, all our powers and members; not one is to be withheld from him. To make a reserve is to deal deceitfully with God, and hypocrisy his soul hates. The meaning is, as one of our old divines* expresses it, "Our honouring, loving, and delighting in creatures, must be an honouring, loving, and delighting in God, in, and for, and by them; as they come from him, as they point at him, as they lead to him, as they resemble him, and as they help us in serving him."

* Clarkson.

2. As to the time when we are to give our hearts to the Lord.

It cannot be too soon. Here is a call to you who are in the younger part of life. You who are unmindful of your everlasting concerns, and live without secret prayer; to whom will you give your heart? Will you give it to the world? Can the world save you? No. It cannot satisfy. You are surrounded with dangerous temptations; and there is a proneness in you to comply with them. Your enemies will tell you, that it is time enough to think of religion; but the word of God says, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." You are not too young to die, and death may summon you on a sudden into eternity, and then what becomes of your soul? Now, while it is called to day, harden not your hearts against God; but in his strength set about the great work of self-dedication. Some of you have been enabled, through grace, to give yourselves already to the Lord.

Finally. Let us begin the year with God. And yet you cannot but know, that the duty
ought

ought to be frequently repeated. Yea, it is required that you dedicate yourselves to him every day. You are prone to wander from him; to give yourselves to him is therefore to return to him.

Put yourselves into his hands, and say,
“ Lord, unite our hearts to fear thy name, and
“ establish our goings.”

SCRIPTURAL HONESTY.

SERMON XV.

PSALM XXV. 21.—

Let integrity and uprightness preserve me.—

DAVID, in some preceding verses of this psalm, is pouring out his complaint before God, because of his desolate and afflicted condition. He speaks of his inward sorrows, that “the troubles of his heart were enlarged;” and then directs his prayer to the Lord for deliverance. “O, bring thou me out of my “distresses.” Spiritual troubles, or troubles upon a spiritual account, are the hardest and heaviest to be borne.

The psalmist, in another place, says, “Thou “didst hide thy face, I was troubled.” And no wonder, for as the light of God’s countenance

nance puts gladness into the heart, so desertion brings on darkness and distress. One of his greatest troubles, was his exile from the house of God. His soul was cast down and disquieted within him, when he was deprived of his religious liberty. In verse 18, he seems to speak of bodily affliction; “Look on mine affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sin.” He knew that sin was the cause of his painful disorder, and in praying for the pardon of it, he was desirous of receiving benefit by his affliction. In verse 19, he mentions his trouble, arising from his persecuting enemies, “who were many, and who hated him with cruel hatred.” Their cause was as unjust, as their measures were violent. He then again looks up for help, that his soul might be kept and delivered, that his confidence might be so supported, as not to draw back in the day of trial. And then comes in my text, which is a continuation of this prayer; “Let integrity and uprightness preserve me.” These words contain the wish, the motto, and the rule of every good man; what he habitually keeps in his eye, and ponders in his heart, They are taken in two senses. Some refer this

this integrity and uprightness to God. By the former, they understand his mercy in promising; and by the latter, his faithfulness in performing his word. Or, which comes to the same thing, the psalmist prays that he might be preserved by the word and the Spirit of God; that, on the one hand, he might not sink under the weight of the affliction which was laid upon him; nor, on the other, be left to his own depraved nature, to do that which is directly criminal. It is true, God is called “the most upright;” and “because he is good and upright,” as this psalm informs us, “therefore will he teach sinners in the way.” And whenever he does teach them, it is their security. But this does not appear to be the sense of the place.

I would rather understand the passage to refer to David's own integrity and uprightness. And in this sense he prays, that he might never be a deceiver or an hypocrite; but that he might always be kept a sincere, honest man, blameless, and harmless in his generation. And this is what every believer desires and aims at; to be uniform in his character, and all of a
piece;

piece; to have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

As to the words integrity and uprightnes, they may be distinguished after this manner.

1. The one is the principle, the other the action.

Where the former is rooted in the mind, the latter will be the fruit that springs from it. This will always be the case, that the trees of righteousness will bring forth “the fruits of righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus to the praise and glory of God.” There may indeed be many defects and short comings; nevertheless, grace in the heart will shew itself in the life. For as the apostle says, “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.” From which passage you may observe, that a real christian may look back with pleasure on what the grace of God has enabled him

him to do. And though he dares not trust in the work of his own hands, as his justifying righteousness before God: yet, in the matter of his sanctification, he may have the approbation of his conscience, as it is purged from dead works, or from the guilt of sin, by the blood of Christ. And while he reviews with pleasure and comfort his past conversation, he ascribes all the good he has been enabled to do to the grace of God.

This is one way in which we may distinguish the words, “the integrity of the heart, and the uprightness of the life.” Or, as David speaks in the first verse of the next psalm, “Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in mine integrity.” And the principle by which he governed himself, is mentioned in the next clause, “I have trusted also in the Lord;” not in mine uprightness, but in the Lord who requires it; “therefore I shall not slide.” We have another instance of this nature, in the experience of king Hezekiah. When he received the sentence of death within himself, he discovered his regard to the interest of religion in his reign, so as to induce him
to

to pour out his supplication before the Lord. In this prayer his desire of longer life is included, if it were the will of God. And there he says, "I beseech thee, O Lord, remember
 "how I have walked before thee in truth, and
 "with a perfect," or sincere, "heart, and have
 "done that which is good in thy sight." And to shew with what affection he spake, it is said, "he wept sore." It was with a prevailing desire to promote the good of his kingdom, that he urges his uprightness as a plea for life. And accordingly this was the testimony given to him. "He wrought that which was good
 "and right, and truth before the Lord his
 "God throughout all Judea." But this will lead me,

2. To another distinction which may be made between the integrity and uprightness of David in the text. The one may refer to his conduct toward God, the other to his behaviour toward man.

As to the former, David was upright before God, with respect to not only his cause, but the state of his soul. He frequently speaks of
 his

his confidence in the divine power and mercy, and of his affection to God's worship. Nevertheless, as one sensible of the corruption of his nature, and the deceitfulness of sin, he prays, that the Lord would "search and try him, "and see what wicked way there was in him," that is, make him know the worst of himself, "and lead him in the way everlasting." And moreover, with respect to man, he was not chargeable with double dealing, his enemies themselves being judges. When Saul pursued him from mountain to hill, and from one corner of the earth to another, he gives this testimony concerning him. "Thou art more "righteous than I; for thou hast rewarded "me good, whereas I have rewarded thee "evil." Thus the Lord did by David as he has done by many an one since, "brought "forth his righteousness as the light, and his "judgment as the noon-day." He will wipe away the reproach which is thrown on his servants, and make their innocence to appear. But even they, who know themselves to be clear of those charges, that are brought against them by man, have reason to join the psalmist in this prayer: that "integrity and upright-

“nefs may preserve” them, or, as the apostle “says, “though I know nothing by myself,” am not conscious of any allowed guile, “yet “I am not hereby justified.” It is not a plea for saving mercy, but “he that judgeth me is “the Lord.” He that searches the heart sees much more iniquity in it, than any of us can be apprised of. “God is greater than our “hearts, and knoweth all things.” The apostle realised to himself that great decisive day, when “the secrets of men shall be made manifest.” And this, he tells us, was his stated practice. Having mentioned “the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the “unjust,” in order to their being judged, he says, “Herein do I exercise myself,” in the view and prospect of that solemn day, I use all diligence, “to have always a conscience void “of offence, towards God and towards men ;” that the one might not be dishonoured, or the other injured. This same distinction is mentioned by the apostle in another place, where he exhorts “to pray for kings, and all that are “in authority, that we may lead a quiet and “peaceable life in all godliness and honesty,” that is, in acts of piety toward God, and acts
of

of righteousness toward men. Where there is the former, there will be the latter. Integrity and uprightness go together.

3. The word rendered integrity is sometimes translated perfection.

Job was a “perfect and an upright man.” And so is every true christian. Not that he is perfect or upright, in the sense in which man was created, all whose powers were exactly conformed to the image of his Creator. Such a perfection of character is not to be found in human nature, except in the man Christ Jesus. It is not attainable by the highest saint upon earth. Nevertheless, there is an evangelical perfection, with which all the people of God are honoured. “For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh to God.” Every believer in Christ is perfectly justified by a righteousness made over and imputed to him, according to the constitution of the covenant; and is perfectly reconciled to God by the death of his son, and perfectly adopted into his family. There is also an inward disposition cor-

respondent to this relative change, and an external deportment suited to it. A change of state, an alteration of the temper, and a newness of life, accompany each other. And that these things may not seem foreign to my subject, I shall just observe, that a right apprehension of such evangelical privileges, has a tendency, and not only so, but an efficacy, to preserve us; if, at the same time, we are found waiting on the Lord. Duty and dependence are to be concomitants. In the verse preceding the text, David prays, that the "Lord would keep his soul and deliver him." His enemies were many, mighty, and crafty, who pursued his life; so that he needed an almighty guard. Therefore, when he prays, that "integrity and uprightness might preserve him," he means that his innocence, in respect to his enemies, might be a defence against their devices; preserve him from the attempts they made upon his life; or else preserve him from doing those things which are unwarrantable, and, on that account, would raise an ill report on the ways of God; or, so preserve him, as never to depart from him. Let integrity and uprightness be my constant companions, that
however

however deceitfully my adversaries may carry it, I may behave at all times like an Israelite. indeed, in whom is no guile. With this variety we may understand the words of the text.

It is the prayer of one who is conscious of his frailties and imperfections. Whoever from his heart puts up this petition to God is sensible of his liability to infidelity and hypocrisy. When we see others guilty of even notorious vices, we ought to remember, we carry about with us a corrupt nature. Sometimes men, from whom better things may reasonably be expected, act the part of dissemblers, and cover their hatred with deceit. But, sooner or later, they will appear in their proper colours. However, this is the use we are to make of such conduct, to turn within, and view our own hearts; and attend to the apostle's caution, "Let him who thinketh he stands, take heed, lest he fall."

It is also the prayer of one who is convinced of his insufficiency to be his own preserver. So numerous are the snares of the world, so

attractive its charms, so formidable its frowns ; and, at the same time, there is such a perverse bias within ; that if the most established, improved christian were left to himself, he would be like Sampson, when the Lord departed from him ; “ as weak as another man,” a prey to every temptation. “ We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves,” any thing that is spiritually good ; “ but our sufficiency is of God.” Job indeed held fast his integrity in a time of danger, when satan moved God to destroy him. And this was his language : “ Till I die I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness,” that is, my sincerity, “ I hold fast, and will not let it go ; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.” I will beware of giving my conscience cause to reproach me. But in the midst of such resolutions, every believer is sensible of his inability to preserve himself.

There is likewise need of a daily watch over our own hearts. “ Keep thy heart with all diligence.” Whatever you neglect, do not neglect that. The heart is so bent to sin, so prone to cease from duty, and to wander in
duty,

duty, that there is constant need of a watchful eye upon it. The more a man takes heed to his ways, and the less he trusts to his own heart, the more remarkable will he be for his upright conversation. If you would have your integrity preserve you, you must preserve your integrity; and the way to do it, is to set a strict guard on your thoughts and affections. Once more,

Always remember the continual need of assistance from the God of all grace. The text is the voice of prayer. And prayer is going to God, and asking him to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. David says, "Concerning the works," the evil works, "of men, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." God's word was his guide. And by observing its directions, he kept himself from those evil ways which lead down to destruction. But as if he were apprehensive he had spoken too highly of himself, he immediately casts his eye upward, and says, "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." He expresses a confidence

of his integrity, but not a confidence in it; and, at the same time, he expects a security from the God of his salvation. So in the text, he could speak of his uprightness in the presence of the Searcher of Hearts, appeal to him for his sincerity, and yet place all his dependence on divine mercy.

In farther treating on the subject, I shall consider, that it is the heart's desire and prayer of every true christian to be entire and upright in the sight of God and man.

FIRST, Consider what it is to possess integrity with God.

This is the medium between the two extremes of perfection and a profession. The one is carrying the matter too far, the other not far enough. A freedom from all sin in this life is no where promised, and therefore is not to be expected. And O, how many are there who come to the place of the holy, and " profess that they know God, but in works deny " him."

1. To

1. To possess integrity with God, is to have the heart set right in his sight.

Here religion begins. "My son," says God, "give me thine heart." If that be withheld, there is only a form of godliness. The apostle Peter said to Simon Magus, what, I am afraid, may be said to many who hear the gospel, "Thine heart is not right in the sight of God." It is a deceived heart, that is turned aside from him, is false to him, and altogether worldly before him. But it is the power of divine grace, to turn a mere formalist into a real saint. And when the Lord undertakes the work, he "unites the heart to fear his name, directs it into his love," and sets it right for himself. The psalmist prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me:" a spirit which shall approve what is right and just before God, and consequently, which hates every false way. An hypocrite has a double heart; an heart divided between God and the world. On the contrary, a true believer in Christ seeks the Lord with his whole heart. As David says, "With
" my

“ my whole heart have I fought thee ;” and at the same time, being sensible of the remainders of inward corruption, he adds, “ O let me not wander from thy commandments.”

2. Where there is integrity of soul toward God, there will be a realising of his presence.

It is the atheistical language of some, who seek to hide their counsel from the Lord, and whose works are in the dark, “ Who sees us, and who knows us ?” If at any time a wicked man has an impression on his mind of God’s omniscience, it fills him with dreadful apprehensions of him as a judge ; so that he had rather fly from him than have recourse to him. This is very different from the temper of an upright soul, who willingly realises his presence. And though it fills him with awe and reverence, nevertheless a pleasure accompanies it. “ I have set the Lord always before me ; because he is at my right-hand, I shall not be moved, therefore my heart is glad.”

3. Where

3. Where integrity toward God is found, there is an holy fear of sinning against him.

Sometimes the presence of men is the mean of deterring the wicked from external iniquity. But a sense of God's eye being upon us will go much farther. This extends to the thoughts, and prevents the indulging of sin there. Temptations may be presented to commit acts of pollution, and they may be urged strongly from the secrecy of the place. But what said upright Joseph? "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" A man of integrity toward God is a man of a tender conscience, who fears to offend him, because it is dishonourable to him. Once more,

4. An upright soul in God's sight is one who pays a conscientious regard to the divine worship.

A mere formal professor, whenever he attends the sanctuary of God, does it from a low motive, and to a low end. But it is not merely custom that brings a believer to it; nor is it his habitual aim to pacify conscience. But a sense,

sense of the wisdom, goodness, and authority of God in appointing ordinances, obliges him; and a desire of meeting with the Lord, to have communications from him and communion with him, urges him on; in all, eyeing his glory as his ultimate end. "Lord," says David, "I have loved the habitation of thine house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth." While some give no attendance, and others a very late one, in his house, a person with an upright soul finds it is good for him to draw nigh to God.

SECONDLY, I now proceed to consider integrity with respect to our fellow mortals.

This is called "executing true judgment between man and man." Many things are said on this head in the word of God. It abounds with rules for our conduct and conversation in the world. For its design is not only to proclaim that there is "peace with God," but to promote a "good will toward men." Religion, which strengthens every obligation, is favourable to the good of the community, and is the most friendly means of advancing the

the benefit of society. Some there are, who live by deceiving and defrauding. They lie in wait. They watch for every opportunity to further their evil designs. And are there not some professors, who will do those things, which may not perhaps be accounted criminal in a court of justice; but which conscience and equity will pronounce dishonourable? If a man prosper in business after a statute of bankruptcy, and do not, when able, pay his former debts, he is not upright, he is not honest. Though there may be no defrauding in a legal sense, yet there is a "withholding good from them to whom it is due." There may be a detaining another's property, where there is no direct invasion of another's right. Such an action is unjust in itself, whether there be any human law against it or not.

I am now speaking of the civil transactions of men, which ought to be conducted with an upright spirit. And where integrity or uprightness is in the soul, it will appear in the life. Indeed it is matter of great lamentation, that some professors do those things, of which a mere moralist would be ashamed. These things

things arise sometimes from pride, at other times from covetousness. What a happy world would this be, if that golden rule of our Lord were generally practised, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.” The common rule of men’s actions is this, “Do to others as others do to you.” But the rule of right is very different. “Do to them as ye would they should do to you.” How would you have men behave to you? What good offices do you desire of them? The same, or those which are equivalent, are expected from you.

1. If you would have integrity and uprightness preserve you, then be honest to yourselves.

Do not put a cheat on your own souls. Do not be one thing in one company, and quite the contrary in another. But remember, wherever you go, conscience goes with you, and the eye of God is upon you. Self-deceivers now wrong their own souls, and will in the issue be self-destroyers.

2. Let

2. Let integrity of heart and behaviour be exemplified in all your dealings in a way of traffic.

It is sometimes the case, that the buyer undervalues, and is unreasonable in beating down a commodity; and if he can obtain it for his price, then he glories. "It is nought, it is nought," says the buyer, though at the same time he knows the contrary; "but when he is gone his way," having bought what he wants, "then he boasteth" of his bargain. But where is integrity in this conduct? Where a sense of God and another world? On the other hand, the feller of a commodity shall sometimes praise his goods more than he knows they will bear; and take advantage of the purchaser's ignorance, that by unjust gain he may increase his substance. It is morally wrong for any to set more than one price on the same thing. To have no more, is the way to prevent a great deal of trouble on the one side, and many a falsehood on the other. "Let no man go beyond, or defraud his brother in any matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such." Sometimes in this world,

world, "what measure you mete to others; shall be measured to you again." However, a day is coming, when "the Lord, the righteous Judge, will bring to light the hidden things of darkness" and dishonesty.

3. The integrity of the upright will both guide and guard them, when they have concerns of importance depending, relative to the happiness of this life.

It is a mercy to be preserved from rash and imprudent steps, which in future time may be the cause of much sorrow and anxiety. But it is a greater mercy to be kept from iniquity, fraud, and deceit. It is good to be open and explicit in making contracts, whether they are made for a settled term of years, or are made for life. And they who are upright in their way, and faithful to their engagements, will find the comfort of it. "Thus saith the Lord, These are the things that ye shall do. Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour, execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates; and let none of you imagine evil in his heart against his neighbour,"

“bour, and love no false oath; for all these
“are things that I hate, saith the Lord.”
And they will hate them, who are upright be-
fore him. Once more,

4. In the whole course of our conversation with men, let us act according to our profession.

We profess to believe the gospel, which is called “the grace of God, that teacheth us
“to live soberly, righteously, and godly in
“this present world.” And this we shall do, if “integrity and uprightness preserve us.” It may be necessary, that some things should be concealed in our conversation. “There is
“a time to keep silence, as well as a time to
“speak.” A wise man’s heart will teach his mouth. But still, every man has a right to truth. If there be any tricking in deeds, or shuffling in words, where is that integrity which God requires? Besides, it brings its own punishment with it; for who will trust that person who has been found to be deceitful? A good man indeed may suffer reproach. His name may be miscalled, and his words

and actions misinterpreted. But a godly sincerity will bear him up, and bear him out. Not only has he a witness in heaven, but he has one in his own breast, which yields more solid satisfaction, than if he obtained the applause of the whole world.

From what has been said, you see the necessity and importance of being upright in the sight of God and man. There cannot be any religion without sincerity. To be entire with God, is to have the heart right with him, to realize his presence, to dread sinning against him, and to be conscientious in our regards to his worship. And where this principle is inlaid, there will be honesty to men in the concerns of this life, whether such as are common, or those which are particular and solemn. Well, then, let each of us, in our application to the throne of grace, carry this petition, "that integrity and uprightness may preserve us." I will close with that common and instructive proverb, which I dare say you will remember, if you can recollect nothing else of my sermon, that,

HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY.

S E R M O N XVI.

1 JOHN ii. 6.

*He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself
also so to walk even as he walked.*

IT was naturally to be expected, that when the Son of God assumed the human nature, and lived in the world; he would set an example worthy to be imitated by all his professing followers. The religion of Christ is an holy religion. Every doctrine of it is according to godliness, and every precept enjoins the practice of it. But it is true, that in all ages, there have been some who denied “the faith, which was once delivered to the saints;” and others who abused it to the purpose of licentiousness: some who rejected the truth as it is in Jesus; and others who “held the
B b 2 “ truth

“ truth in unrighteousness.” The apostle, in the text and context, speaks of some in his day, who made a profession of Christ, and called themselves by his name. But they did not make his will their rule, nor his conduct their pattern. As our Lord says to the Jews, “ If ye were Abraham’s seed, ye would do the works of Abraham;” so here, If ye were really the disciples of Christ, ye would do the will of Christ, and follow his example. The jews said, “ We are Abraham’s seed.” So they were after the flesh. And these professors said, We belong to Christ. So they appeared to do by their profession. This was the whole of their evidence. They were christians in name and not in deed, and in truth; just as thousands are at this day.

You may observe, that the apostle in the text does not speak of ~~those who~~ do abide in Christ, but of those who say they abide in him. We read in the fourth verse, “ He that saith “ I know him, and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” And verse ninth, “ He that saith he is in the “ light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness
“ even

“ even until now.” Thus the apostle James says, “ Though a man *say* he hath faith, and “ hath not works, can faith, *that* faith save “ him ?”

A claim is here supposed which a man puts in: I abide in Christ. I have an interest in him. How shall this claim be tried, whether it be valid or not? Why, says the apostle, if your claim be just and good, you ought to walk so as he walked. This implies, not only that there is an obligation upon you, but that you will give to others the proof of it.

If we take the phrase, “ abiding in Christ,” in its utmost extent, it comprehends union and communion with Christ, and adherence to him. Our Lord says to his disciples, “ Abide “ in me,” as those who are united to me. Keep your fellowship with me, “ and continue “ ye in my love” and commandments. But the expression in the text may be taken in this general sense; he who calls himself a christian, let him behave himself as a christian. Or, as the apostle Paul says, “ Let every one who “ names the name of Christ, depart from ini-
 B b 3 “ quity.”

“quity.” Let him copy after Christ. If he do not, he brings a reproach on his profession; and does what in him lies to make “Christ a
“minister of sin.”

What I intend in discoursing on the subject, is to set before you several particulars in the life of our blessed Lord, wherein he is an example to be imitated by us. But here I would premise, that there were some things which he did, which he never intended should be imitated, nor indeed can they be. And these were of two kinds; his miraculous deeds, and those which he did in the character of a Mediator between God and man.

With respect to the former; to attempt to imitate him in them, would be pride and presumption, folly and madness. We are told of Simon Magus, as he is generally called, that he “gave out that he himself was some great
“one.” And so bewitched were the people with his forceries, that “the multitude said,” from the least to the greatest, “this man is the
“great power of God.” We read also of
“the seven sons of one Sceva a, jew, who took
“upon

“ upon them to call over them who had evil
“ spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus, saying,
“ We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preach-
“ eth.” I might mention the pretended
miracles said to be wrought by saints and
priests in the church of Rome; which scrip-
ture calls “ lying wonders.” And, more-
over, we are not ignorant of the boldness of
some, who more lately assumed the power of
restoring disabled limbs to their proper use and
exercise; saying, as Christ did to the man who
had the withered hand, “ Stretch forth thine
“ hand;” and when the patient said, “ I can-
“ not,” the answer was, “ It is not for want
“ of power in me, but of faith in you.” Much
after the same manner, some undertake to cure
diseases, without the application of what have
always been thought proper means, and only
by signs and motions. Though there is no
professed imitation of Christ, it has the appear-
ance of it. I say, it was never designed, that
there should be so much as the shadow of an
imitation of him in his miraculous works.

Nor was it designed, that Christ should be
imitated in those works which he wrought in

the character of a Mediator between God and man. But, you may ask, Who ever made the attempt? I answer, Every one who goes about to reconcile himself to God by his repentance and good works, and thus close the breach which sin has made. This is taking Christ's work out of his hands. It is in a sense, an iniquitous imitation of him. We need not wonder that the papists professedly introduce diverse mediators, when many a nominal christian, in his heart, thinks he is sufficient of himself to make his peace with God,

But what an absurd and monstrous opinion is it, that a consecrated wafer is changed into the real Christ; and in the mass is offered up as a sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead, though not a drop of blood is shed! "without the shedding of which there is no remission!"

Now, though in the text our blessed Lord is set forth as a pattern, it does not suppose, that there can be a perfect conformity to him in this present world. Nevertheless, every one who loves him will aim at a resemblance of him.

him. It is natural to imitate those whom we love, when we see any quality which is deserving of imitation. The example of Christ is without an equal. We are to follow others so far as, and no farther than, they follow him. And I say, if we really love the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall make it our study and practice to follow his steps.

I shall mention several particulars in the conduct of our Lord, toward his heavenly Father and toward men, in which he is to be imitated by us.

FIRST, I shall lay before you several steps of his life, in his conduct towards his Father, in which he was intended to be our pattern. And,

1. Consider his stated and diligent attendance on public worship.

We all know, that mere human examples have a great influence upon us, and too often a bad influence. It is so with respect to professors, when some encourage themselves in a neglect

neglect of duty, because they see others do it. Thus it is “the manner of many to forsake “the assembling of themselves together.” Such an excuse, such a plea, will be of no avail in the day of death, and at the tribunal of God. Nor will it be made by any who have a proper sense of the divine authority, and who seek the prosperity of their souls.

But what I here chiefly urge is the conduct of Christ, of whom we read in many passages, that he attended the solemn festivals in their appointed seasons at the temple; and it was his custom to go to the synagogue on the sabbath-day. And what a pattern was he to you who are in the early part of life; for we read, that he went up to Jerusalem, after the custom of the feast of the passover, at twelve years of age. Now in his stated attendance on divine ordinances, and his devout observation of the sabbath, we have no warrant to say, that he designed his own spiritual benefit and improvement. O no. He was the Lord of the sabbath, and of all the institutions of religious worship. But herein he proposes himself to us as “our example, that we should follow
“ his

“his steps.” And can there be a better guide? Surely they who live in the habitual neglect of the service of God, and who violate his command, to “keep holy the sabbath day,” say in their conduct, as the devils did to Jesus, “What have we to do with thee?”

2. The secret and private devotion of our Lord is recorded, to be imitated by us.

Many attend the worship of God in the sanctuary, who vainly imagine, it is religion sufficient for the week. But what says our blessed Lord? “Thou when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and pray to thy Father which is in secret.” And did he give this rule without exemplifying it, or putting it in practice? No. We read of him once and again, that he retired not only from the world, but from his disciples, on purpose to pour out his soul before his heavenly Father. “When he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray. And when the evening was come he was there alone.” And at another time it is said of him, “In the morning, rising up a great while before day,

“ day, he went out, and departed into a
“ solitary place, and there prayed ” You see
how he redeemed time from sleep, to keep up
communion with God his Father ; for in the
day time he had much business upon his hands.
Now, why is it thus recorded of him, that he
gave himself to secret prayer, but to set us an
example, that we ought to walk with God in
secret as he walked ?

Our Lord elsewhere says, “ Whosoever
“ heareth these sayings of mine, and doth
“ them, I will liken him unto a wise man who
“ built his house upon a rock.” One of these
sayings of Christ, in his sermon on the mount,
is what I just now mentioned, “ Thou, when
“ thou prayest, enter into thy closet ; and
“ when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy
“ Father who sees thee in secret.” This say-
ing of Christ all of you have frequently read or
heard. And you now hear, that he enforced
this saying by his own example. Are there any
of you, then, who disregard both the precept
and the pattern ? Do you call yourself a christ-
ian ? And shall neither the authority nor the
conduct of Christ have any weight with you ?

He

He said of the scribes and pharisees, "They say and do not." On the contrary, our Lord practised what he commanded. And why? But to teach us, by his example, to draw nigh to God in solitude; and this will every one who is godly make conscience of doing. To this I will add, that we have instances of our Lord's praying with his disciples, as well as apart. It is said of our Lord, "when he was alone praying, his disciples were with him." The word *alone* respects the multitude. When he separated himself from them, he took the opportunity of praying with his disciples. And as they were his family, he is therefore set before us as an example of family prayer. I would hope that none of you who are heads of families, live in the omission of this duty. If so, you cannot say you walk in your house as Christ walked. Yea, the very heathen had their household gods, to which they paid their devotions. But how many thousands, who call themselves christians, are worse than the heathens in this instance: "they profess that they know God, but in works they deny him."

3. Our blessed Lord is set before us as an example of holy confidence in God his Father.

The apostle to the Hebrews produces several passages from the Old Testament, and applies them to Christ. Among the rest, this is one, "I will put my trust in him." The margin refers us to David's language, "My God, my strength, in whom I will trust." Whether that be a true reference or not, we are assured there is a prediction of what his enemies would say of him while he was suspended on the cross, "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him." Accordingly you find, that the chief priests, with the scribes and pharisees, who were his bitterest adversaries, said, in a taunting manner, "He trusted in God, let him deliver him." As if they had said, He pretended to trust, but it is only a deception. He has deluded himself; for if his confidence were fixed in God, God would now deliver him out of his misery. But notwithstanding all their reproaches, our Lord did even then put his confidence in his heavenly Father; as the apostle Peter tells us, speaking of Christ, "who when he was reviled,

"ed,

“ed, reviled not again; when he suffered he
“threatened not, but committed himself to
“him that judgeth righteously.” His com-
mitting himself, together with his cause, into
the hands of his Father, was the highest exer-
cise of faith. And herein he is to be imitated by
his followers in all ages; to live a life of faith
and dependence upon God, to betake them-
selves to him in times of difficulty and dan-
ger, to put themselves for safety into his
hands, and to commit their cause to him, that
he might plead it against the reproaches of the
world. Let me ask you, whether you walk
in this particular as Christ walked? Do you
give up yourselves to the Lord, repose your
trust in him; and when the wicked would
shake your faith, and entice you from your
hope in God, by their smooth words, or by
their ridicule and revilings, do you then “with
“purpose of heart cleave to him,” and refer it to
his wisdom to execute righteous judgment for
you; and in his own time to “bring you forth
“to the light, that you may behold his righte-
“ousness?”

4. Our Lord was a pattern of heavenly-mindedness and contempt of the world.

Not only did the nation of the Jews expect, that when the Messiah should come, he would set up a worldly kingdom; but his apostles also were deeply tinctured with this popular prejudice. And he had the fairest opportunity to gratify them. But when the multitude would have taken him by force, and made him a king, did he in any degree encourage them? No, he withdrew from them. For he came down from heaven, and “his kingdom is not of this world.” His language was, “I receive not honour from men.” His soul was taken up with heavenly concerns; and his manner of life fully expressed, how diminutive in his eyes were the riches, dignities, and pomp of this world.

Shall, then, they who call themselves by his name, set their hearts on these external, uncertain things, and make them the chief objects of their pursuit? O call not yourself a follower of Christ, if the world and the things
of

of the world be supremely loved. We are not to be indifferent to any duty respecting the body and the present life. Whatever is commanded of God, ought to be done. But if we be not loosened from the gratifications of sense, if the heart be not set on heaven and heavenly objects, if things that are above be not sought in preference to things on the earth, how can it be said, that we walk as Christ walked? Surely he is a pattern of heavenly mindedness. And if there be not a desire and endeavour to be conformed to him, christianity is wanting.

5. Our Lord is set before us as an example to be imitated, in his zealous and diligent obedience to the will of him that sent him.

He often speaks of it with the highest pleasure. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. I must work the work of him who sent me, while it is day." And in another place he says, "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." Now, was his obedience attended with the utmost readiness and exactness?

Herein he is a pattern, that we give all diligence in performing the various duties which are incumbent upon us. Did he say to his Father, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God, thy law is within my heart;" and shall we be reluctant, and slothful, and heartless in the service of God? I am sure, if we are the real followers of Christ, such a backsliding temper and conduct will be the grief and burden of our souls. What! he so zealous, and we so lukewarm; he so diligent, and we so careless; he so ready, and we so listless! These things ought not so to be.

6. Consider the patience and submission of Christ in the sufferings he endured from the hand of his Father.

"It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief, when he made his soul an offering for sin." "The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?" It was indeed full of the most bitter ingredients, so that even his innocent nature for a moment drew back. Yet he returned, saying, "Not my will, but thine be done." With what
 patience

patience did he go “as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearer he was “dumb!”

What an animating motive is this temper of our Lord to imitate him? And it will have an effect on those who believe in him. Be your trials and afflictions as grievous as possible, they are not to be mentioned with those which he underwent. Why then should you repine? Surely, if you walk as he walked, which his example and your profession oblige you to do, your soul, sometimes at least, will bow to the sovereign disposal of God, and say, “Do with me as seemeth good in thy sight.”

SECONDLY, I shall now, in a few particulars, represent to you the temper and conduct of our blessed Lord toward men, in which he is held forth to his professing people as their pattern.

In general, “he went about doing good;” not only in healing all who were diseased, in which, as I hinted, he is not an example to us,

but in such instances as the following, in which he is our example.

1. In his religious conversation.

“ Grace was poured into his lips,” and “ his speech was always with grace seasoned with salt.” There was a continual favour in it. We read of his edifying discourse, not only with his apostles, but in the houses of those who invited him to their tables. It is to be lamented, that so few walk as he walked in this particular. What trifling, impertinent, unprofitable talk, if not corrupt communication, proceeds out of the mouths of many, who account themselves christians! Christian conversation, and the conversation of such christians, how widely do they differ! But, surely, there is a time to speak of that which is good to the use of edifying. “ They who fear the Lord, will speak often one to another;” and “ a word in season, how good is it!”

2. Our Lord is a pattern of meekness, humility, and condescension to men.

When

When two of his disciples were for calling for fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, who did not receive their Master, what meekness did he discover, in saying, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of!” And when he washed the feet of all of them, he said, “I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you;” that is, stoop to do the meanest office of kindness one to another. And O how wonderfully did his meekness and gentleness shine in the midst of the provocations and indignities which he suffered from his enemies. How unlike, then, are they to the Lord Jesus, who are haughty, and passionate, and revengeful. But certainly, they who are his true followers, as they are bound, will, in their measure, tread in his steps, and learn of him who is meek and lowly in heart.

3. Our Lord is an example of fidelity in giving reproof.

He not only gave the most pungent rebukes to his enemies, but he reprov'd his disciples, when he beheld their irregularities. And shall

we suffer sin upon our brother, and not in anywise rebuke him? How then do we follow Christ? "Faithful are the wounds of a friend," and "a rebuke will enter more into a wise man, than an hundred stripes into a fool." So far as Christ is taken as our example, will our faithfulness to one another appear.

4. He was a pattern of justice in his dealings with men.

When he was at Jacob's well, he sent his disciples into the city to buy meat. And when his enemies asked him, with an ensnaring design, "Whether it were lawful to give tribute to Cesar?" whether they should pay their taxes, "he said to them, Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's." To follow Christ's example, in this particular, is "to render to all their dues;" to be honest and just in all our transactions.

5. Our Lord was a pattern of benevolence.

Though in general others ministered to him of their substance, yet he had a compassionate heart

heart to them who were in necessity, as we learn from observing, that “the disciples
“thought, because Judas had the bag, that
“Jesus had said to him, Buy those things
“which we have need of against the feast, or
“that he should give something to the poor;”
which implies, that they knew he was used to
it. “Who so has this world’s good, and sees
“his brother have need, and shutteth up his
“bowels of compassion from him, how dwel-
“leth the love of God in him?” And how
can it be said of him, that he walks as Christ
walked? Once more,

6. Our Lord was a most perfect example in
his forgiveness of injuries.

I need only to mention the excellent spirit
which he discovered on the cross in his prayer,
“Father, forgive them, for they know what
“they do.” To resemble him, is to be kind one
to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one an-
other, if any man have a quarrel against any.
Be ye, therefore, followers or imitators of
Christ as dear children. Upon the whole,

They who are Christ's, who have an interest in him, are under peculiar obligations to follow his example. It is true, there are a thousand defects and imperfections on the part of the best of men. But remember, these imperfections are confessed before God with contrition and striving against them. And it is the heart's desire, the prayer, and the endeavour of all who trust in Christ for salvation, that they may walk as he walked.

INTERCOURSE WITH, AND BLESSEDNESS
FROM GOD.

SERMON XVII.*

PSALM XCI. 15.

*He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I
will be with him in trouble; I will deliver
him, and honour him.*

WE have here a cluster of precious promises; and in the preceding verse, the person is described to whom they appertain.

* This sermon was preached by the venerable author at the Tuesday lecture, in New Broad-street, on March 12th, 1799. The following discourse he reserved for his next turn, on March 26th. But when that day arrived, he was waiting for his approaching change, and anticipating the accomplishment of the latter part of his text in the most exalted sense which it will bear; "I will deliver him, and honour him." To gratify many of his friends, who heard the first of these discourses with pleasure, and were disappointed of the second, they are both made public. Mr. WINTER preached his first sermon in that ancient lecture, on Tuesday, July 13th, 1762. He was chosen to succeed the REV. THOMAS HALL.

“ Because,

“ Because he hath set his love upon me,” saith the Lord, “ therefore I will deliver him. I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.” They who have set their love upon God, or have given him their hearts, are interested in him as a prayer hearing God. They may be in trouble, but he will grant them his presence in it. They may be in danger, but he will deliver them out of it. They may be in obscurity, and even in disgrace, but he will honour them. I shall discourse on these precious promises in the order in which they stand.

FIRST, Every one that sets his love upon God, has recourse to him by prayer, and an interest in him as the hearer of prayer.

1. Every one who sets his love upon God, has recourse to him by prayer.

And how can it be otherwise? For every one who loves God, loves his commandments. And assuredly prayer is one of them. How frequently are we exhorted to it! “ In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving,

“ thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. Men ought always to pray, and pray without ceasing.” But notwithstanding it is so often enjoined, multitudes, and even many professing christians, live in the total neglect of it. The reason is, because they do not love God. For it is certainly the case, that they who do love him, make conscience of conversing with him by prayer. They lift up their soul to him, they pour out their heart before him.

Men begin to call upon the Lord, when the Lord calls them by his grace. It is true, many prayers may be made by men, while they continue in a state of unregeneracy. But those prayers are not better than the cries of nature. “ In their affliction they will seek him early,” and earnestly too. If a man were in perils of waters, and in danger of drowning, and were to see even his enemy near, he would call to him for assistance. It is not because he loves that man that he cries to him, but because he loves himself. Thus when persons are in the depths of distress, beyond the power of fellow
mortals

mortals to help them, as they have a general notion of God that he is Almighty, no marvel that they cry aloud to him. We read of King Saul, that he said, "The Philistines will come down upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord. I forced myself, therefore, and offered a burnt offering." The praying of the wicked is all forced work. It is extorted from them; as it is said of the hypocrite, "Will he always call upon God?" No: only when distress and anguish come upon him. Then he may call, but God will not answer.

On the other hand, that is prayer in God's estimation, which flows from a renewed heart, as a stream from a fountain; or, as breath proceeds from a living man. The soul being quickened by the Holy Spirit; from that spiritual life which is infused into him, desires are offered up. Or, in other words, the fire of divine love is kindled within, and the sparks fly upward. Not till Saul of Tarsus was converted, do we hear of his praying. And when the Lord said to Ananias, "Behold, he prays!"

“prays!” the note of admiration is prefixed, not because it is a wonder that a convert prays, but because the heart of so vile a sinner was changed. Upon such a change wrought in him, it would be a wonder indeed if he did not pray: yea, it were impossible but that he should. For, as I just now said, where life is given, there will be breathing. “Thou hast heard my voice; hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.” When the Lord calls a sinner by his grace, then that sinner begins to call on the name of the Lord. Yet, after all, the unregenerate are to be exhorted to the duty. “Pray God,” says Peter to Simon Magus, “if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.”

It follows, that prayer is the stated and habitual course of them who set their love on God. It was a groundless charge which Eliphaz threw upon Job, “Thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God;” whereas we have many instances of his praying, while the afflicting hand of God was heavy upon him. And when the Lord turned his captivity into prosperity, he spake of him to his friends
with

with this encomium, "My servant Job shall
" pray for you, for him will I accept."

A child of God may not indeed speak so often to his heavenly Father, as he ought. But who can imagine he will pass a day in silence? Has he nothing to say in a way of complaint? Does no temptation whatever assault him? Is there no inward corruption that rises within him? Has he no petition to present, no want to be supplied? I now speak of set times for prayer, be they twice or thrice a day, less or more; as David says, "Evening
" and morning, and at noon, will I pray." Be his worldly avocations ever so pressing, and his temptations ever so numerous, it cannot reasonably be thought, that any child of God is so far left to himself, as not to make prayer his daily practice. If he be in his right mind, he will keep in the right way. And what is said of Gideon's army, may be applied to him, "faint, yet pursuing." Even at the worst, when his heart is labouring with grief and dejected, yet he will follow on, and continue in prayer. Or, as it was with Jonah, "When
" my soul fainted within me, I remembered
" the

“ the Lord ; and my prayer came in unto thee, “ into thine holy temple.” It was also the resolution of David, “ I will call on the Lord “ so long as I live.”

I observe, that prayer is the instituted mean for obtaining of God those blessings which he has promised. There is not a mercy needful for the body or the soul, but it is promised in the scripture. Thus in Ezekiel God promises to “ give a new heart and a new spirit.” And having spoken of spiritual blessings, he then says, that he would “ increase their corn, and “ the fruit of the tree. But for these I will “ be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it “ for them.” Supposing there were no promise on record, it would nevertheless be our duty to present our requests to God. But as there are promises without number, of every thing that is necessary and convenient, what greater encouragement can be desired? “ Ask “ and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, “ knock and it shall be opened to you.” This brings me to observe,

2. Every

2. Every one who sets his love on God has an interest in him as the hearer of prayer. "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him."

What indigent man would not think himself happy, who had a friend able and ready to supply his wants whenever he applied to him? But let it be remembered, that in the case before us, we are far from being competent judges what is most proper for us, with respect to the enjoyments of this life. No wise man will ask that of God, which he has not promised in his word. It is true, he has promised the good things of this world, but it is upon condition, so far as he knows will conduce to our best interest, which is the prosperity of the soul. — Agur's prayer is seldom offered with sincerity. The principal thing which he implored is too often forgotten. "Remove from me vanity and lies." It is as if he had said, Take away all iniquity from me. And having sought first spiritual blessings, he next comes to desire "food convenient for him." Now they who intreat of God these things, shall obtain them. He will
give

“give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” And when the Spirit is given, all “spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Jesus Christ” are given with him. And as to temporal things, they shall be granted in that manner, that measure, and that season, which infinite wisdom sees proper. And when the Lord knows, that this and the other thing is not good for us, he not only wisely, but graciously refuses it. Is a father’s love of his children to be questioned, because he will not gratify all their wishes? What are the highest and holiest of men, when compared with God, but little children? And shall such teach him knowledge? You cry to “him in the day time, and “he hears not, and in the night season you are “not silent.” What then, will you entertain hard thoughts of him? If you behave as his sons and daughters, you will be resigned to his disposing will. But if you be not gratified in some one thing, can you say that he has never answered you in any thing? If in the very time when you have cried, he has not answered you, yet by waiting for him, have you not had reason to rejoice? Some examples are recorded in scripture of immediate answers to

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prayer.

prayer. "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." And there were many instances, in which answers were given a considerable time after prayer. When God himself says, "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him," we are sure that, sooner or later, he will exemplify his own character. Yet let it be observed, that in the nature of things, all the prayers which his people offer, cannot be answered till the day of Christ's appearing. For what is the uttermost of their desires? Is it not to be blessed with the full enjoyment of God in their whole persons? But this happiness will not be accomplished till the great day.

To what I have said I cannot but add, that God never answers prayer for the sake of prayer. The most fervent petitions are accompanied with such imperfections and wanderings of heart, that were it not for "the much incense" of our Lord Jesus Christ, not one would be heard and accepted. He is "that other angel" who is represented as "standing at the altar, having a golden censur :

“fer : and there was given him much incense,
“ that he should offer it with the prayers of
“ all faints.” O then, whenever you pray,
think upon your need of Christ as the only
Mediator, rely on his atoning sacrifice, and
trust in him as one who ever lives to make in-
tercession. There are men risen up among
us, who leave out the Lord Jesus, and say, we
are not to ask any thing of God for his sake.
But as it was under the Old Testament, so
surely it is under the New. They who drew
near to God, implored blessings on Christ’s ac-
count. Daniel says, “ Now therefore hear
“ the prayer of thy servant, and his supplica-
“ tion; and cause thy face to shine on thy
“ sanctuary, for the Lord’s sake :” for the sake
of the promised Messiah, who is Jesus Christ
the Lord. And “ whatsoever ye ask in my
“ name,” says our Lord, “ I will do it.” I
now proceed to observe,

SECONDLY, The promise of the divine pre-
sence in a time of need. “ I will be with
“ him in trouble.”

Here we are led to consider the life of a real christian, as it is a mixed state, composed of that which is grievous, and that which is joyous. Both are his experience. If any persons were to be exempted from trouble, would they not be the best part of mankind, those whom God has chosen for his friends and favourites; yea, whom he has made his own family? Yet it comes to pass, that his sons and daughters are in trouble more than other persons. How does it so happen? Not by chance, but by the appointment of a wise and merciful providence. And why are they in common afflicted more than the wicked? It is, if I may so speak, because this world is the only hell they shall suffer. "In their life time they receive all their evil things." No wonder, therefore, that they are "troubled on every side." Yet for this cause they do not wholly sink under their burdens, because the Lord is with them. Here let us take a view of the dark, and then of the bright side of the cloud.

1. The children of God are exposed to, and feel trouble.

With

With respect to bodily affliction, though they bring it not upon themselves by intemperance, riot, and uncleanness, yet their bodies are as frail and mortal as others. It is a thought which cannot but give some relief, that when pains and sickness assault them, they did not procure these things to themselves by their evil deeds. They come more immediately from the hand of God. Therefore they can say with the psalmist, “ he “ weakened my strength in the way,” that is, in the course of my life, and in the way of duty. Job was renowned for his integrity; yet he complains, “ My bones are pierced in me “ in the night season, and my sinews take no “ rest. When I say, my bed shall comfort me, “ and my couch shall ease my complaint, then “ I am full of tossings to and fro till the dawn- “ ing of the day.” But, not to lengthen out the time, in speaking of the infirmities of nature and of years, the children of God are troubled in the world, because they are not of the world. Look into the history of the church, and read the sufferings which were endured by the martyrs and confessors of the Lord Jesus. The severest tortures which the

craft and malice of the wicked could contrive, were inflicted on them. Blessed be God, our lot is cast in days of liberty. But as there are some who discover a persecuting spirit, who, as the prophet Micah expresses it, "bite with their teeth, and yet cry peace;" it shews, that if God were to take off the restraint which is upon them, they would devour his Israel with open mouth. There is also worldly trouble arising from losses and disappointments, in which religious persons and families have been involved, owing in great measure to the gross imprudencies, and sometimes to the excesses of those they are connected with. Yea, there are greater troubles which the righteous endure, than those which light on the body, and proceed from the world. Their iniquities prevail against them. Indwelling corruption opposes them, and carries them into captivity. They "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." "Satan desires to have them, that he may sift them as wheat," And that adversary is sometimes suffered to agitate and distress them
with

with his suggestions, so that they are brought to the border of despair. And, moreover, the Lord may withdraw the tokens of his love, and fill them with impressions of his anger. "Thou hidest thy face, and I am troubled." And "while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted." This has been the adversity of many, and it is the bitterest ingredient in their cup.

1 Now put all these things together, and see if there be any sorrow like unto that sorrow, wherewith the Lord afflicts his people? But,

2. Let us turn to the bright side, and we shall discern a sufficiency of power to give relief.

"The Lord himself who makes sore, binds up; he wounds, and his hands make whole." And what can be so great a source of consolation, as the promise he here makes? "I will be with him in trouble." Be the trouble what it may, whether felt or feared, natural or spiritual, of body or mind; from scripture we learn, that the Lord is present in that man-

ner with some of the children of men, in which he is not with others. Besides his omnipresence, there is his peculiar, spiritual, and gracious presence; which commences from the day of their conversion, and which is never wholly withdrawn from them. For he has said to each of his people, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." But, when we read such a promise as this, "I will be with him in trouble," it carries a farther idea, that he will be with them in that manner and way, in which he is not with the same persons at other times. When they are so troubled, as that the company of their best friends can yield them no comfort and effectual relief, then he seasonably interposes on their behalf. Let it here be observed, that the promised presence of God is operative and influential. And in this sense he is with them,

(1.) To uphold and strengthen them to bear their trouble. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Were it possible for
all.

all troubles which can be named, to be imposed on any one real christian, the weight would be nothing to the Lord God omnipotent. "Underneath are everlasting arms." He not only can, but will support the soul under the heaviest burthens. And he has done it sometimes to the admiration of many. Again,

(2.) The promise has been accomplished, so as to rejoice the heart in fiery trials. Often does the apostle speak of the consolations which flowed in to him in the midst of his sufferings. "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolations also abound in Christ." Some of the martyrs of Jesus, while burning at the stake, have been filled with the presence of God, in such measure, as to feel no pain. Further,

(3.) The Lord is present with his people in trouble, to bring those things to their remembrance, which revive and animate their souls. There is every thing in the gospel which tends to encourage. And when he shews them by his word and Spirit what Christ has done and suffered, and what he is now doing for them; that

that they have an everlasting righteousness to rely upon; that the promises are their's to plead; yea, that they are in the way to the heavenly inheritance, which is reserved for them; what can they want more? One good word of God brought home and applied to the soul, will raise faith and hope. And once more,

(4.) He will be with them to work a resigned frame and temper in them. If they be full of joy with the light of his countenance, yet he will enable them to see his hand, and to say, "it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good in his sight." Indeed, you may know that the presence of God is with you in trouble, when you are enabled to discern the evil of sin as the cause of adversity, and are humbled for it, as it is offensive to God; when you find it is good for you to draw near to him, and are desirous that the affliction may be profitable to you. "O thou who art afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted;" behold the promise of a faithful God. Take it, and carry it to the throne of grace. Say to him, Hast thou said, "I will be with thee in trouble?" "Remember thy

“thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou
“hast caused me to hope.”

The remainder of the subject I leave to another opportunity, and conclude with observing the following things.

1. Has the Lord said of them that love him,
“They shall call upon me, and I will answer
“them?” How culpable then are they, who,
when he grants their request, are unobservant
of the mercy!

Before you retire to rest, you make conscience of committing yourself to the divine protection. In the morning when you rise, you find the Lord has made you to dwell in safety. Is not this an answer to your prayer? And how many answers of this kind have you received of God!

2. Has the Lord heard the voice of your supplication? Let it be improved, as a motive to excite your love to him, and your resolution to persevere in prayer.

Recollect

Recollect the words of the psalmist, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplication; because he has inclined his ear to me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." Mr. Henry has this thought on the expression, *He has inclined his ear to me.* "This intimates his readiness and wonderful condescension. He lays his ear, as it were, to the mouth of prayer, to hear it, though it be but whispered in groanings that cannot be uttered."

3. How deplorable is their condition, who have no heart to pray, and consequently have no interest in a prayer hearing God!

You meet with trouble, and you say you must bear it well as you can; it is common to men. But have you no God to approach? No; nor do you desire that privilege. But "can your hearts endure? Can your hands be strong, in the day when the Almighty deals with you?" It is said, "God shall cast upon him, and not spare; he would fain flee out of his hand." But how much better would it be, to flee to him in
your

your distress! for he is to all such a very present help in trouble.

Lastly, Let the gracious presence of God be sought in all your afflictions, and in your attendance on his institutions.

This is the life of the soul. This sanctifies troubles, and renders the means of grace useful. “O when will he come unto me?” He has said, “In all places where I record my name, I will come to them and bless them.” “Seek then the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near. Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his face continually.”

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INTERCOURSE WITH, AND BLESSEDNESS
FROM GOD.

S E R M O N XVIII.

PSALM XCI. 15.

*He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I
will be with him in trouble; I will be with
him and honour him.*

TROUBLE is the engine in God's hands to lift up the soul to heaven. Nothing is more easy than to say the words of a prayer. But to pray hungry and thirsting, is the hardest of all works. It is easy to offer up many prayers to God. But who offers up himself to him? When I began to treat on this subject, I observed that the preceding verse gives us a description of the persons to whom these great and precious promises appertain. They who "set their love upon God," have recourse to him by prayer; and they have an interest in him

as

as the hearer of prayer. This is the first of the promises here recorded, "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him." And have not some of us experienced the goodness of God in this article? We have sought to him, and he has in due time granted our request. We ought then to take up the language of the psalmist, "I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my supplication." I would urge it on myself and you, to think of God before we speak to him. Let us recollect to whom we are about to address ourselves. Let us search into our spiritual necessities, and then spread them all before him. David says, "Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my meditation." He meditated before he poured out his heart in prayer, and he found that it turned to good account. And above all, if you would have your prayers answered, meditate on the Redeemer, who is the way, the truth, and the life. None can come to the Father but by him. And together with that, think on the necessity you stand in of the Holy Spirit to help your infirmities.

Before

Before I enter on the last promise mentioned in the text, "I will deliver him," I shall make a few observations on the presence of God, which some think they have, but have not; and which others fear they have not, and yet have. I shall speak very plainly, for I would be understood by the meanest capacity. As to those who think they have God's presence, but have not, I would observe two things.

1. It is no sure token of the presence of God, that he is with you of a truth; when he gives you bodily health, lively spirits, the comforts of life, and a relish for them.

These are great blessings, and demand thanksgiving. Yet many possess them, and are never thankful from their hearts. I believe it is not uncommon for persons to deceive themselves in this particular. They consider external prosperity as a certain sign of the divine favour. If the good things of this life flow in upon them, and they have health to enjoy them, they are ready to conclude, that these are testimonies of the love of God, and that his presence is with them. But we are

not to form an estimate of real happiness from such things as these. A man may have a sound constitution, success in his undertakings, and the friendship of the world, and yet the Lord may be far from him.

2. Pleasing sensations of mind excited in the performance of religious duties, are not a certain proof of the presence of God.

The scripture gives us examples of persons, whose affections were greatly moved under the preaching of the word, so that they had much delight in hearing it, and, no doubt, thought they received saving benefit by it. But their pleasure and joy, instead of springing from the presence of God, arose from some outward cause. Some of Ezekiel's auditors were highly delighted under his ministry. His graceful delivery, and his tuneful voice, raised their attention, and moved their passions. But while "they shewed much love" with their mouths, and spake of him in the highest terms as a preacher, "their hearts" were carnal, and went after "their covetousness;" and they were talking against him by the walls, and in the
doors

doors of their houses. Take another instance. In the preaching of John the Baptist, there was something that pleased even so profligate a man as Herod; for "he heard him gladly," and even went so far as to reform some things that were immoral in his conduct. And farther still. Our blessed Lord "spake as never man spake." Thousands followed him, and "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." They were like them, of whom he spake in the parable of the sower, "who received the word with joy; but had no root in themselves." I would observe also, that in the duties of prayer, and singing the praises of God, the affections may be enlivened, and yet God may not be the author of that elevation. Real christians, as well as common professors, are liable to deception in prayer. The desires for some temporal blessing may be carried out with great fervor; and they may think, that this enlargement is a sure evidence of the divine presence, and that they shall obtain their request; whereas it may arise only from a selfish spirit. There may be much importunity, where no faith is exercised in a divine promise. And likewise

in finging the praises of God, pleasure may be taken, the natural passions be enlivened, as there is something in the duty which has a tendency to excite joy; yet no melody may be made in the heart to the Lord. Consequently the Lord is not graciously present. It is well said in a recent publication, "Professing christians should be very careful that they do not mistake the fancies and delusions of their own hearts for the influences of the Holy Spirit. Strong effects have often been produced on the natural passions in devotional exercises, when there has been no unction from the Holy Spirit." Is it therefore enquired, How shall it be known that God is with the soul by his peculiar presence? This I answer under the other head, namely,

He is graciously present with some when they perceive it not.

The promise shall be verified, "I will be with him in trouble." But it so happens, that the troubles of the heart are made to be the ground of objection. You have an instance of this in Gideon. "The angel of the Lord,"
 who,

who, we have reason to believe, was the promised Messiah, appeared to Gideon, and said to him, "The Lord is with thee." Gideon, not knowing him at that time, said, "If the Lord be with us, why is all this befallen us?" Agreeably to this, if a true christian, under heavy afflictions, and with great sorrow in his heart, were to be told, that he was favoured with the presence of God, it were no wonder that his unbelief should say, "If it be so" that God is with me, "why am I thus?" But has not the Lord spoken these good and comfortable words, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee?" Does not this assurance shew that he is with them who are under the power of distressing fear? He does not indeed afford them the joyful manifestations of his presence. Nevertheless he is with them. But how shall this be known? You may know it by such effects as these. When you discern the hand of God in your trials, and are humbled under it. When you lament the evil of sin as the procuring cause of them, and acknowledge that God deals with you less than your iniquities deserve; when you are more desirous that the afflictions with which you are exer-

cised may become profitable than be removed; when you prize the throne of grace, and liberty to pour out your soul before the Lord; and, in a word, when you justify God, and condemn yourselves. These are tokens for good, that God is with you of a truth. Moreover, when you are engaged in the worship of God, whether it be secret or public, you may know that he favours you with his presence, by the goings out of your soul after conformity to him in holiness, communion with him, and the fruition of him. I now proceed to the

THIRD branch of the subject, which contains a promise of DELIVERANCE. The Lord says of him who sets his love upon him, "I will deliver him." I will not only be with him in trouble, but I will deliver him from it.

Frequently we find the psalmist calling upon God for this mercy; and in many passages he acknowledges it with thankfulness. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him from all his troubles." And in another verse, "I fought the Lord,
" and

“ and he heard me, and delivered me from all
“ my fears.” How common is it for fear to
arise and disturb the mind in the prospect of
trouble. And how often has God dissipated
our fears, as David says, “ Thou art my hiding
“ place, thou shalt preserve me from trouble,
“ thou shalt compass me about with songs of
“ deliverance.”

There are providential deliverances, and
those of a more spiritual nature; deliverances
both personal and domestic; some which re-
spect the body, and others which have a more
immediate reference to the soul: all which
suppose threatening danger. One while we
are to all human view on the verge of ruin.
And if the hand of God be not stretched out
in our favour at the critical moment, all is
over with us. And when at other times he
employs instruments, and makes use of second
causes, it is in such a manner as to shew us,
that the praise is due to himself.

1. I shall begin with the deliverance of the
body, in the immediate prospect of death

In various places the psalmist speaks of the weight of bodily affliction. "I am feeble and fore broken. My heart panteth, my strength faileth me. My bones are vexed. My life draweth nigh to the grave." Then did he call on the Lord, and was answered. "Though he was chastened fore, he was not given over to death." And has not this been the experience of some of you? Look back and consider. Was there not a season when your life was in imminent danger? Had you at no time "the sentence of death within you?" And were not those around you possessed of the same apprehension? But in the mount the Lord was seen. "He that shewed you great and sore troubles, quickened you again, and brought you up again from the depths of the earth." The most likely means which could be devised were made use of. But who infused a blessing into them? I speak now to those who have set their love upon God. "He delivered you, because he delighted in you." And do you not remember how desirous you were to devote your restored life to him? Did you not call
call

call on your soul, and all that is within you, to bless his holy name, for the healing of your diseases? And were you not ready to say to others, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." You read of Hezekiah, that when he was sick unto death, "he prayed to the Lord." But "he rendered not again according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was lifted up, therefore there was wrath upon him." Happy would it be, if this instance of ingratitude were singular. What! break the commandments of God after such a deliverance as this! It is well you have it recorded farther of him, "Nevertheless, he humbled himself for the pride of his heart." Some indeed there are of whom it is said, "Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more?" They are somewhat affected in soul when the hand of God is heavy upon them. But when they are recovered to health, they wax worse and worse, and become more negligent of duty, and more eager after the world. Here we see the corrupt bias of the heart.

2. When

2. When the Lord promises "I will deliver him," it includes a salvation from enemies.

David speaks frequently of his being in danger from wicked, deceitful, and bloody men, and fervently prays that the Lord would not give him over to their will. Many a time he was just ready to fall into their hands. They not only "bent their bow to shoot their arrows "at him even in bitter words," but they used all their policy and power to destroy him. Though we are not in a similar situation, yet there are now many adversaries, who "sleep not except "they do mischief." And it is no small mercy to be delivered from their devices. Our common preservations by night and day are numerous; and they who commit themselves to the divine care and custody, taste the sweetness of them. Especially to be delivered from the temptations of the evil one; or when we are tempted, from being overcome by them; what a privilege is this! It is said in the psalm before us, "He shall deliver thee from "the snare of the fowler." We may take it
in

in a spiritual sense, according to Dr. Watts's version,

“ Satan the fowler who betrays,
“ Unguarded souls a thousand ways.”

To guard against this subtle and indefatigable enemy is our duty, and to be enabled to do it is our comfort. “ The Lord knows how
“ to deliver the godly out of his temptations;”
and he will so deliver them, that this wicked one shall not fatally touch them. And,

3. The greatest of all deliverances is to be delivered from sin.

For this did David pray, “ Deliver me from
“ all my transgressions.” Not only did he pray to be “ kept from presumptuous sins,” but to be “ cleansed from secret faults.” And in another place he says, “ Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” They who set their love upon God, are most of all desirous to be saved from sin. Were it not for this evil, nothing could trouble them. Does not indwelling sin rise in you daily? What
“ foolishness

“foolishness is bound up in the heart!” What unbelief and distrust of God! What vanity and pride; anxiety about the world; undue love of it, and covetous desires after it! What discontent with our lot! What impatience and fretfulness of spirit when our inclinations are crossed! Do these corruptions give you no uneasiness? Do you not strive against them? Is not here a burden under which you groan? If it be so, it is your heart’s desire and prayer, “O Lord I beseech thee deliver my soul.” Well, the Lord will deliver thee from every evil work. Christ purchased deliverance with the price of his blood. The atonement is made, and almighty power is ready to apply redemption. “Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy; and with him is plenteous redemption: and he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” I shall close this part of the subject in the words of a pious minister of the national church; “We shall never know the thousandth part of our mercies, deliverances, and protections, temporal and spiritual, till we come to another world.”

Well,

Well, then, here is a promise to be pleaded, "I will deliver him;" be his natural or spiritual danger what it may, be his transgressions ever so great and numerous. To them who are enabled to trust the promise it shall be fulfilled; for faithful is he who made it.

FOURTHLY, I proceed to the last promise given in the text, "I will honour him."

Every one who sets his love upon God, shall not only be delivered from evil, but shall be honoured by him. And the honour which he confers, consists not in worldly grandeur, but in spiritual privileges. In this respect, the poorest cottager in the earth who loves God, is honourable in his sight. Consequently, the honour which the Lord puts upon his people, is hidden from mortal eyes.

1. Would it be reckoned an honour for subjects to be visited by an earthly king? This is but a shadow of that honour with which the King of Heaven honours those who love him.

"The

“ The high and lofty One who inhabits “ eternity,” condescends to draw near to, and to dwell with, them who are of an humble and contrite spirit. They who breathe out their desires as David did, saying, “ O when “ wilt thou come unto me? O visit me with “ thy salvation;” these shall be honoured with his presence.

2. Is it an honour to have free and constant access to the royal presence? Far superior is it to have the liberty of approaching God upon every occasion.

“ In Christ we have boldness and access “ with confidence by the faith of him.” This boldness is always accompanied with the deepest humility. Every true christian, we may say, is a spiritual courtier. The palace of the great king is open to him; and the more frequently he approaches to converse with his heavenly sovereign, the more welcome he is. Yet let it be remembered, that there is no admission, unless introduced by the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no entrance into the holiest, but by faith in his atoning blood. “ If any man serve me,” says our
 Lord,

Lord, "him will my Father honour." And this is one way of serving Christ, by reposing our confidence in him. They who thus obey him, have full liberty to come at all times to the throne of grace.

3. The Lord honours them who love him, by conferring on them honourable titles.

An earthly king is the fountain of honour; and to him it appertains to prefer and dignify his subjects. The Sovereign of Heaven does more. He exalts to honour all those that love him. "Such honour have all the saints," as to be not only his servants and his friends, but his sons and daughters. "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy from the dunghill;" that is, he takes them from their low and polluted condition in which they naturally lived, "that he may set them with princes, even with the princes of his people." And in that character they have power with God. They whom the Lord thus honours, are made partakers of a nature suitable to their dignity. It is not uncommon in the world for princes and nobles to make themselves base and contemptible by their dissolute

solite conduct. On the contrary, that honour which comes from God only, is always accompanied with a spirit of purity. If you see professors conforming themselves to the vain and sinful customs of the world, it is a proof they are of the world, have received the spirit of it, and therefore have neither part nor lot in this matter of which I am speaking. Once more,

4. God will honour those who love him; by investing them with the glory of the heavenly state.

The expression in the text, "I will honour him," may be rendered, as it sometimes is, "I will glorify him." As if the dignity to which he raises his people on earth were a small thing in his sight, he has spoken also of them for a great while to come. For in his appointed time he will admit them into his inner court, to his immediate presence, and to the full enjoyment of his love. To conclude,

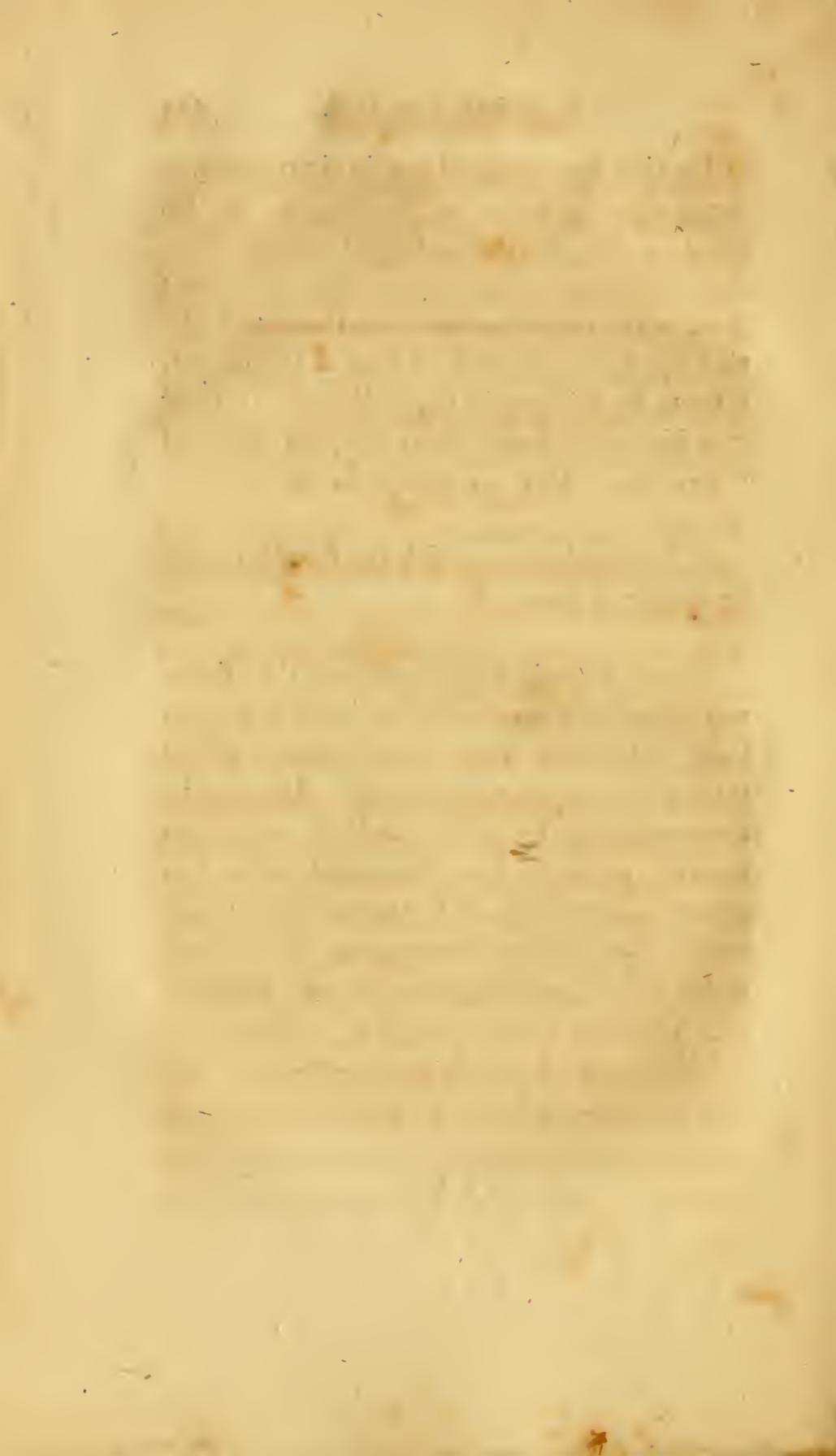
1. Is the Lord the deliverer of his people, then apply to him for whatsoever deliverance you stand in need of.

He

He that has delivered you in six troubles, is surely able to deliver in the seventh; for his hand is not shortened that it cannot save. And as his ear is not heavy, that it cannot hear, what encouragement is there to hope, that upon your recourse to him in the deepest distress, he will appear in your behalf. "Trust in him at all times; pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for us."

2. Let the honour which the Lord promises be sought of him.

Do you not take pains to procure the esteem and favour of men? And will you not say to God, "O remember me with the favour which thou bearest to thy people!" Let me be crowned with thy loving-kindness and tender mercy. A smile from his countenance is a greater felicity than all the approbation of the world. And let that standing maxim and rule in the divine government be seriously attended to. God says to you and me, "Them that honour me, I will honour; and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed."



THE BEST EMPLOYMENT UNDER THE BEST
INFLUENCE.

SERMON XIX.

2 THESSALONIANS iii. 5.

*And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of
God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.*

THE holy apostle having in the preceding verses desired the prayers of the church in Thessalonica, that the gospel might be attended with success, and the opposition to it from wicked men be removed; he then gives a most comfortable promise, that “they shall be established and kept from evil” by a faithful God, and confirmed in the faith and holiness of the gospel; and so kept, as to be preserved from final and total apostacy. Then the apostle says, “And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and

“ will do the things which we command
“ you.” From what he had seen of their religious deportment, and heard of them now he was absent, he trusted in the Lord, that they did and would obey the things commanded them; that they would submit themselves to the authority of the Lord Jesus, which he and his fellow labourers declared to them. For be it observed, the apostles did not assume any power over the consciences of men. They made known no other commandments, than what they had received from the Lord; as he says to these very Theſſalonians, “ Ye know
“ what commandments we gave you by the
“ Lord Jesus.”

Now the apostle being about to give them rules for their behaviour one toward another in their church relation, which he does in the following verses, puts up for them this prayer in the text, whereby he lets them know the necessity of the divine influence, without which they could not perform their duty in a proper and acceptable manner. I shall set before you,

FIRST,

FIRST, The things which the apostle here specifies, “the love of God, and the patient waiting for Christ; and,

SECONDLY, The petition which he offers to the Lord, that he would “direct their hearts into them.”

FIRST, Consider the things which the apostle here specifies, “the love of God,” and “the patient waiting for Christ.” Let us take them distinctly.

I. I shall discourse on the love of God.

This expression sometimes means that love, which God manifests to men. And we read of the “kindness and love of God our Saviour, which toward men appeared.” It is commonly distinguished into a love of benevolence or good will, which is his design to save them; and into a love of complacency and friendship, when he has wrought his image within them. This distinction is warranted by scripture. Although God might form a merciful purpose to deliver miserable sinners from the ruins of the fall, yet he cannot be pleased with them,

while they are workers of iniquity. They are then in a state of enmity, under the condemning sentence of the law, and the children of wrath. Nevertheless, even then there is nothing to forbid his having an intention to deliver and save them for the glory of his grace. But he cannot delight in them, till he makes them partakers of his likeness. “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and his countenance beholds the upright. He takes pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy.” Now if we understand here by the love of God, that love which God has to his people, then by their hearts being directed into it, is meant their having a greater knowledge of it, and a larger experimental acquaintance with it. And is not this a very desirable attainment, to know and taste that love, which is the original cause of our salvation?

But by the love of God in the text, we are rather to understand that love which is in his people toward him. And by their hearts being directed into it, is meant their continually being fixed on him; that their hearts might not wander from him, and misplace the affection due

due to him on other objects. Other objects are to be loved in a subordinate degree; but of the supreme love of the soul, none but God is worthy. This is called in several passages "the love of God." Our Lord said to the unbelieving jews, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." And the apostle John says, in his first epistle, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" This part of the subject then leads me to consider two things.

1. The love of real christians to God. And,
2. What reasons may be assigned for its being called "the love of God."

1. The love of real christians to God.

This is not only their duty, but their temper and character, whereby they are distinguished from the rest of mankind. And a most

wonderful change it is; that such as once hated God, should be brought to love him. It is indeed looked upon by multitudes, as attended with no great difficulty. But as a man may say, "I have faith," and be destitute of it; so he may say, "I love God," and yet be alienated from him. They who do truly love him, are apt to question it. They have a thousand fears, whether their love be genuine, because they find so much attachment to the world, so much reluctance to the duties which God requires. How, say they, can love to God be consistent with our self-seeking; such unsubmitiveness to his disposing will, such ingratitude for mercies? I answer, If these obstructions are felt as a burden, and mourned over, it is because there is life. And where spiritual life is, there is love. Now the love of real christians to God is founded in a knowledge of him. Their minds being enlightened, they behold him according to the discoveries of his word, to be not only merciful and gracious, but holy and righteous; a reconciled God in Christ, in whom all divine perfections shine with a peculiar lustre. They love him for his purity, as well as for his kindness. And the
more

more they discern of his holiness, the greater beauty and glory they perceive in him. The reason why the wicked say they love God, is because he is good to them. But will they say they love him, when he heaps afflictions upon them? No. Then they indulge hard thoughts of him. "What have we done to deserve all this misery and trouble?" On the contrary, a real christian loves God when he takes away, as well as when he gives. And even in the severest trials he justifies his proceedings, and acknowledges that "he punishes him less than his iniquities deserve." This is as true a mark of the love of God, as any that can be produced; to see God with the rod of affliction in his hand, and while feeling the smart of it, then to own that he is taking the best course with him: this is a sure sign of sincere love.

2. Consider, what reasons may be assigned, why a christian's love to God is called *the love of God*.

God is the origin of it. The love which is in God to man, takes its rise from himself; it
is

is uncaused from any thing without him. But the love which is in man to God, does not originate from his own heart, but springs from God's love to him. If God had refused to set his love on any of the fallen children of Adam, not one of them would ever have loved him. Therefore the apostle John says, "We love him, because he first loved us." As the rays emitted by the sun, are the light of the sun, so that love which is shed abroad in the heart is God's love, because it is a beam descending from him. Consequently,

He is the immediate worker of it. It is not a natural principle; we are not born with it. It is not an acquired disposition, or the fruit of our own efforts. But it is a gracious quality, with which God endues the soul. What is said of his fear, or the fear of him, is applicable to his love, or the love of him; "I will put it in their hearts." If he himself did not put it there, it would never be found there. This love is of God's operation, and not of the power of man. Again,

It

It may be called the love of God, because God is its principal object. As it flows from him, so it is directed to him. It would not deserve to be called his love, if he were not the chief object of it. Although creatures are to be loved for his sake, yet when put in competition with him, they are not to be loved at all; for he will have no rival. So the psalmist says, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and
"there is none upon earth that I desire beside
"thee." It is as if he had said, There is none in heaven and earth I love beside thee; for what the soul desires, that it loves. To this agrees what our Lord says, "He that loveth
"father or mother, son or daughter," meaning any creature whatsoever, "more than me,
"is not worthy of me." This the evangelist Luke more strongly expresses, "If any man
"come to me, and hate not his father and
"mother, and wife and children, and brethren
"and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he
"cannot be my disciple." The passage may be illustrated by a quotation, which several authors have given from the work of Jerome.
"If the Lord Jesus Christ should call me to
"him, though my father should lie in the
"way,

“ way, and my mother should hang about my
 “ neck, I would go over my father, and shake
 “ off my mother, and run to my Saviour.” O
 my friends, if Jesus Christ be at all the ob-
 ject of your love, you would not think it were
 too much to love him, as God commands us
 to love himself. “ Thou shalt love the Lord
 “ thy God with all thy heart, and with all
 “ thy mind, and with all thy strength: Once
 more,

A christian’s love to God may be called
 God’s love, because he has required it. When
 the jews said to our Lord, “ What shall we do
 “ that we may work the works of God?” he
 answered, “ This is the work of God, that ye
 “ believe on him whom he hath sent.” Faith
 is called the work of God, because it is what
 he enjoins. “ This is his commandment,
 “ that ye believe on Christ.” For the same
 reason may a christian’s love to God be called
 God’s love, because he has expressed his au-
 thority in requiring it. In this sense we are
 to understand this expression, “ Woe to you
 “ pharisees, for ye tythe mint and rue, and all
 “ manner of herbs; and pass over judgment
 “ and

“and the love of God.” These ought “ye
“to have done, and not to leave the other
“undone.”

II. The other thing to which the apostle prays that the Lord would direct the hearts of the Thessalonian converts, is “the patient
“waiting of Christ.”

The literal rendering we have in the margin, “the patience of Christ,” which is not to be taken for the patience which is in Christ, but as the love of God means that love which is in a christian’s heart to God; so “the patience of Christ” signifies, as it is here well translated, “the patient waiting for him.” The apostle, in the preceding epistle, speaks largely of the second appearance of Christ to judgment; which when the Thessalonian believers had read, they put a wrong construction upon it. And there were deceivers around them, who suggested, that Paul’s meaning was, that the coming of Christ was so near, that it would be in their day. So you find in the beginning of the second chapter, “Be ye
“not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled,
“neither

“ neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter
“ as from us, as if the day of Christ were at
“ hand. Let no man deceive you by any
“ means; for that day shall not come, except
“ there come a falling away first, and that
“ man of sin be revealed, the son of perdi-
“ tion.” In connection with this account,
the apostle prays in the text, that, “ the Lord
“ would direct their hearts into the patient
“ waiting for Christ.” It is as if he had said,
The Lord Jesus Christ will not appear a se-
cond time so soon as you imagine, and are se-
duced to believe. Nevertheless, as he certainly
will come, though ye know not the time, my
prayer for you is, that the Lord would direct
your hearts into “ the patient waiting for
“ him.”

This is an essential truth of the gospel. Yet
how few are influenced by it, even among pro-
fessors. Were this doctrine cordially received,
that “ we must all stand before the judgment
“ seat of Christ,” and every one of us give a
strict account of ourselves; surely we should
not be so negligent of duty, so careless in the
performance of it, so attached to the world,
and

and so indifferent to one another's best interest, as we are.

Whether the doctrine influence us or not, it is certain, for God has spoken it, that " the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." It will be the most terrible day to the unbeliever and impenitent, and the most joyful period to the real christian, who is described as " waiting patiently for it."

Some confine the apostle's sense to the exercise of christian patience under trials and afflictions. I think the idea is to be carried farther, according to our translation. Yet it implies a patient bearing of sufferings for Christ's sake. And what greater encouragement can
there

there be to endure them, than what arises from the doctrine of his second coming? For they who suffer with him, shall also reign with him. Now "to wait patiently for Christ," is thus described by the apostle, "Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope; but hope that is not seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." To wait with patience for the coming of Christ, is to live from day to day, unto the end of life, in a firm belief of this grand event; looking for it, and loving the prospect of it. Thus "by patient continuance in well doing," we should "seek for honour and immortality."

Now the apostle knowing the necessity of divine influence to enable even true christians themselves to love God, and to wait patiently for Christ, puts up,

SECONDLY, This petition, "The Lord direct your hearts into these things."

Here

Here we are to consider, both the Object to whom the apostle prayed, and the matter of his petition, or that for which he prayed.

1. The Object to whom the apostle prayed:

It was not to an angel, nor to any departed saint. He knew that as prayer is a part of religious worship, it was to be offered to God only. I am of their mind, who apprehend, that as God the Father, and Christ, are mentioned distinctly in the verse; he who is called the Lord is the Holy Spirit, the third Person in the Godhead, whom the apostle in another place calls "the Lord the Spirit," and whom the apostle Peter expressly styles God.* The text, in connection with others, is a sufficient warrant to authorise our distinct addresses to the Persons in the Deity. Consider;

2. The matter of the petition, or what the apostle prayed for.

It was, that "the Lord would direct their hearts into the love of God, and the patient

* Acts v. 4.

“waiting for Christ.” The original word signifies a direction in a straight or right line, which implies, that the hearts of believers themselves are subject to irregular motions, and are often out of place and order. Love to God, and patiently waiting for Christ, are not always in proper exercise. Created objects take up more of their affections and desires than are their due. It is true, they habitually love God with supreme affection; and the bent of their soul is to look for the coming of Christ. But there is a necessity, that the same spirit who implanted grace at first, should excite it into action; put them into a good frame, and preserve them in it.

Every one who knows himself, is conscious of multitudes of wanderings from God and Jesus Christ. And therefore he ought to put up this petition for himself, “The Lord direct my heart” that goes so much astray; bring it to its proper center, and keep it fixed there. O that the Holy Spirit would every day enable me “to love God, and wait for the coming of Christ” as I ought.

Here

Here then we learn what true religion is. Is it to love God, to believe in Christ, to hope and wait for him. If a man's heart be not under the power of these things, his religion is vain. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." You may perform a thousand duties externally, and your fellow worshippers may have a good opinion of you. But if your heart and soul be not in them, they are displeasing to God.

Now that we may go right in what we do, it is necessary that we be under the influence and conduct of the Blessed Spirit. This teaches us to beware of provoking and grieving him, lest he withdraw his sensible presence, and leave us to ourselves. Upon the whole,

Let me put the question to you, whether you love God or not? Many professors have no doubt of it, because they duly attend his worship. But do you not read of some, "who with their mouth show much love, but their heart goes after their covetousness?" To which do you give the preference, the Lord's day, or any other day? The holy scriptures, or any other book? The service of God, or

your secular employment? The people of God, or the men of the world? Ask yourselves seriously, as in the sight of him who knows your heart, and consider, it is of eternal moment, on what object your chief affection is placed.

Again, Put another question, Whether you patiently wait for the appearance of Christ? He will certainly come again to be your judge. But do you desire his coming? And did you ever say in your heart, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly?"

Lastly, Be assured of your need of the Holy Spirit to guide and govern your hearts. Let us look up to him therefore by prayer, for his powerful and gracious operations; that thereby we may be reduced unto God, cleave to him in love, and "wait for his Son from heaven, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." Amen.

CHARGE
AT THE ORDINATION
OF
THE REV. JOHN WINTER,
AT NEWBURY,
SEPTEMBER 15, 1784.

PREVIOUS to my entering upon that part of the service, which I am to take, in the solemn and important transactions of this day, permit me to ask this numerous assembly, and do you ask your own consciences, what was the motive which induced you to come hither upon this occasion? I speak not to those who stately attend the worship of God in this place, so much as to you who attend in other places. Some of you, I doubt not, appear with a right spirit. You come with a desire and design to glorify God, and to get good to your souls. You come to express your joy, that the church of Christ which assembles here, is now settled with a pastor according to

their mind, and we trust, one after God's own heart; and to unite with them in supplications and thanksgivings in behalf of both. You come to behold "their" gospel "order," "and the stedfastness of their faith in Christ."

But are there not others of you, who are actuated by no better a motive than a vain curiosity? You come merely to see the manner, in which an ordination among Protestant Dissenters is conducted, or to hear what is said by this and that man at this season. O that all of us, both ministers and people, did lay it to heart, that a day is approaching, when we must give an account to God, of this as well as of every action of our lives. Yea, "the Lord will "bring every work into judgment, with every "secret thing, whether it be good, or whether "it be evil."

The business in which I am to be employed, is to give a word of exhortation to you MY BELOVED NEPHEW, and fellow worker to the kingdom of God, who have been a comfort to me. In doing this, I assume no authority over you; but would be considered as your remembrancer.

membrancer. It was your happiness, that from a child you knew the holy scriptures, and were brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And how far superior was your mercy, when God "began that good work in you, which he will perform until the day of Jesus Christ." It is matter of thankfulness, that in the early part of your life, you went through a regular course of studies for the sacred ministry, with diligence and with reputation; that in the several place where you have occasionally preached, you were enabled uniformly to bear your testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus; and that now the special providence of God has directed your way to fix with a people, who for a long course of years have been blessed with the joyful sound of the gospel. They and you now stand in a very endearing and interesting relation to one another. You have taken upon you the care of their immortal souls, and come under solemn engagements to be faithful to your trust, to watch over them for the Lord, and "to nourish them up in the words of that faith and good doctrine," of

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which

which you have made a public profession. You have been set apart this morning to the pastoral office by prayer with imposition of hands. And it is now expected that I address you, by giving a word of advice suitable to this occasion; which I shall attempt to do, in the name and strength of our glorious and gracious Lord and Redeemer, the only head of his body the church.

It is usual to make some passage of scripture the basis of the charge or exhortation; more commonly from the New Testament. And indeed, what christian minister who reads the epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus, but must see the nature and extent of his office, with his obligations and encouragements to fulfil it? I wish you frequently to peruse those epistles. For my own part, I am ready to say, that while I was seeking for a portion of scripture, an Old Testament text came to my mind, which I thought might be accommodated to the present design. You will find it in

MALACHI ii. 7.

For the priest's lips should keep knowledge (and they should seek the law at his mouth) for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.

I shall not take up your time in descanting upon the context; but only observe in general, that when Malachi prophesied, which was after the return of the jews from their captivity in Babylon, it appears, there was a very great degeneracy among all ranks of people. The priests in particular, men in holy orders, led a life of wickedness; and by their vile conduct, and erroneous interpretations of the law, they prejudiced the minds of many people against it, and caused them to stumble at it, and to live in a direct violation of it. This, by the way, shews the powerful influence of example, and what great necessity lies upon superiors, especially on men of a sacred character, to take heed to themselves as well as to their doctrine. You need not be told, that the sons of Levi under the law, were typical
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of professing christians under the gospel, who are expressly called “an holy priesthood, to offer
“ up spiritual sacrifices unto God, which are
“ acceptable by Jesus Christ.” Nevertheless, as there was then an order of men whom Jehovah appointed to go before his people in their religious worship; so now the Lord Jesus Christ has instituted and fixed a standing ministry in his church. Upon his exaltation, “he gave some pastors and teachers, for the
“ perfecting of the saints, for the work of the
“ ministry, for the edifying of his body.”

The directions therefore which were given to the priests concerning their behaviour, may be justly admitted to point out the duty, which is incumbent on the ministers of the gospel. And seeing you are invested with this high and honourable office, you may think you hear the words of the text spoken to you. Your “lips should keep knowledge, for you are
“ the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.” The duty which respects the people, that “they
“ should seek the law at your mouth,” does not come under my immediate notice.

I shall

I shall open that part of the verse, in which the ministers of the word are particularly concerned.

FIRST, The passage implies, that they who teach, and preach to others, should have their own minds and hearts stored with knowledge.

SECONDLY, That they should be ready and willing to communicate their knowledge on all proper occasions. And,

THIRDLY, For their encouragement and comfort, they should consider the honour conferred upon them, in being constituted the “messengers of the Lord of Hosts.”

FIRST, The passage implies, that they who preach to others, should have their own minds and hearts stored with knowledge.

It is a dreadful character which Isaiah gives of the watchmen of Israel, “They are blind and ignorant;” which agrees to what our Lord says of the pharisees, who accounted themselves wise and holy men, that they were
“blind

“blind leaders of the blind.” Now, my dear nephew, as you are called to feed the flock with knowledge and understanding; it is necessary that you yourself be properly qualified. I speak of that knowledge which is necessary for the right and comfortable discharge of your ministerial function. It would be no more strange and inconsistent for a physician not to be skilled in the medical art, than it is for a man who is called a divine, to be unacquainted with divinity. Whether you be a natural philosopher, or a mathematician, is not the question. The knowledge of the liberal arts is ornamental and useful in its place. But when I speak to you, whose profession is that of a minister of the gospel, I must say, that it is necessary you should have knowledge of yourself and of the Lord.

1. Know thyself.

This has been often quoted, as a celebrated saying of one who was called one of the wise men of Greece; Solon, the Athenian lawgiver. I take upon me to affirm, that how highly soever that maxim was regarded by the wisest
of

of the heathen, you cannot know yourself in the manner you ought, unless your understanding be enlightened by the Holy Spirit, which you are not to expect, but in the use of appointed means.

Though I have ground to hope that you are interested in that gracious promise, "They shall be all taught of God," yet with respect to the knowledge of yourself, there is room for farther degrees of it. In dependence therefore on divine teaching, keep up an acquaintance with your own heart. Let no day pass over, without setting apart some time for examining and proving your own self. The more you inspect your spiritual state and temper as you stand before God, the greater need you will see of that gracious provision which he has made in the everlasting covenant for the sinful children of men. You are among that number; a sinner by nature and by practice. This you readily confess. But you are to be diligent in looking in to yourself. The best of men have sometimes feared that they have been self deceivers. When the scripture says, "The heart is deceitful above all things,
" and

“and desperately wicked; who can know it?” The meaning is, who can know it thoroughly? None but God has perfect knowledge of it; as it follows, “I the Lord search the heart.” Nevertheless, there is a sense in which a person may know his heart. And in order to gain further knowledge, he must accomplish a diligent search. Humility is a necessary qualification. And the way to possess it, is to converse with yourself, as in the presence of the all discerning God. An habitual sense of the depravity and sinfulness of your nature, will furnish you with arguments for walking humbly before God and men. The greater knowledge you have of yourself, the better fitted will you be for the work of a christian pastor. Whatever be your natural, your acquired, and your spiritual attainments, there is continual reason to be low in your own eyes.

2. Know the Lord.

A minister's lips should keep the knowledge of God. But how can he keep that for the benefit of others, which he does not possess in his own soul? You are well assured, that it
is

is one thing to be favoured with the means of knowing God, and another thing to know him cordially. We have abundance of the former in our country. Yet, comparatively speaking, how few are so acquainted with God as to be at peace with him!

Here I would urge you to search the scriptures daily, not only as they are translated, but in their divine originals; for in them the almighty Jehovah has revealed himself, in his nature and perfections, in his persons and purposes, in his works and ways. Would you know, who and what God is and does? "Seek out of his book and read." Would you have your soul enlarged? Dig into the mine for the treasure which lies there. "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding. If thou seekest her as silver; and searchest for her as for hid treasure; then shall thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Whenever therefore you take the volume of inspiration to read, make conscience of offering prayer to him who indited it, to "open your eyes, that you may see the wonderful things which are contained

“ contained therein.” There you read of the fall of Adam, and of his offspring with him: There you are shewn the way of recovery and salvation by Jesus Christ, together with the office and work of the Holy Spirit, in applying purchased redemption. Now “ you shall know” these essential truths “ if you follow on to “ know them.” Beware of reading the scriptures in a negligent, cursory manner. Meditate as you go on; and endeavour to fix what you read, not only in your memory, but in your heart. The Bible is that book, with which you are to be most of all conversant. Hence you are to take every doctrine you preach. By this only rule you are directed how to work and how to walk. “ To the law and to the “ testimony; if you speak not according to “ this word, it is because there is no light in “ you.” Hitherto, I trust, you have made it the rule of your faith and conversation. What I exhort you to is, that you would still adhere to it. Desire and endeavour that you may be filled with the knowledge of the will of God, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. When the apostle says to the church at Corinth, “ I determined not to know any thing
“ among

“ among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified ;” he means, that the person of Christ, and the redemption of sinners by his meritorious death, should be the principal subjects of his ministry. And to let us know, how sensible he was of his need of being spiritually and experimentally acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ as God Man Mediator, he tells us, that his fervent desire was “ to know him,” or to grow in the knowledge of him, “ and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.”

You see then that the knowledge in which I am pressing you to increase, is not that which is merely speculative and notional, whereby your understanding may be informed ; so much as that knowledge which influences the will and affections, which like the sun enlightens, and purifies, and warms.

“ Give all diligence, then, to add to your faith virtue,” or fortitude, “ and to virtue knowledge.” The knowledge of your own

H h

heart,

heart, and the knowledge of God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Study the different parts which each of the sacred three has taken in the grand business of salvation. And implore that gracious assistance which is promised in the gospel; without which, you can neither know or do any thing, to your own comfort, and the advantage of others. The sum of what I have said to you is, cultivate a lively sense of religion in your own soul. Be industrious to maintain and preserve the power of godliness, that you may preach to others what you have known by experience. I will just mention, that when your venerable grandfather, Mr. Bradbury, was ordained, in 1703, Mr. Shower thus expressed himself in his charge. “The whole of a minister’s work
 “ will some way be influenced by the frame
 “ of his spirit. As it is better or worse with
 “ us as christians, so are we like to be more or
 “ less useful as ministers. If our hearts be
 “ cold, and hard, and earthly, though in a de-
 “ gree consistent with true grace, our preach-
 “ ing will favour of it.” I pass on,

SECONDLY,

SECONDLY, To exhort you to be ready and willing to communicate your knowledge on all proper occasions.

When it is said, "The priest's lips should keep knowledge," the meaning cannot be, that he should keep it to himself, or withhold it from the people; because it is immediately added, "and they should seek the law," the interpretation of the word, "at his mouth." Ministers must not only be furnished with a stock of religious knowledge, but must "bring out of their treasures things new and old;" things which agree with the case of every modest humble enquirer. One of the qualifications which the New Testament makes necessary for a christian bishop, one who takes the oversight of the flock of God, is that he be "apt to teach," capable of giving instruction to his people, with freedom, ease, and propriety. Now I urge, that you communicate knowledge both privately and publicly.

1. Aim to communicate religious knowledge in conversation with your people.

This implies that you make them christian visits. Otherwise, how can you know the state of your flock, and how can you speak a word in season to them? Your own prudence will dictate to you, to be cautious of prying into the secrets of families, and of meddling with things there which belong not to you. Yet as you have assumed the office of being their teacher, you will find your account in it, if you follow the example of the apostle Paul in this particular, who says of himself, that “ he taught not only publicly, but from house
“ to house.” In your visits, let the poor as well as the rich, the weak as well as the strong, the afflicted as well as the healthy, the illiterate as well as the more knowing, children as well as the adult, be the objects of your attention and regard. You may have to do with some good people who are backward to converse upon religious subjects, and yet are capable. Here that passage is applicable, “ Counsel in the heart of man is like deep wa-
“ ter, but a man of understanding will draw
“ it out.” Putting a little water into a pump is the way to fetch out more. If “ they
“ who

“ who fear the Lord should speak often one
“ to another” for their edification and comfort ; surely the ministers of Christ, of all persons, ought to be ready to so good a work.
“ Let the communication which proceeds out
“ of your mouth, be that which is good to the
“ use of edifying.”

Then will “ your lips feed many.” And while you are dispensing the words of knowledge in your conversation, if it be done with humility and the fear of the Lord, you will not only gain their esteem and respect, but it will be helpful to the increasing your own store.

2. Be ready to communicate and diffuse knowledge in your public ministrations.

See to it, that you deliver to the people that which is worthy of being called knowledge ; not trash, but treasure ; not raw, I mean undigested things, but such as are duly prepared before-hand. The preacher who is wise, will teach the people knowledge ; he will give good heed, and seek to find out acceptable

words, even words of truth. You are to give all diligence with respect to both matter and manner. Shun not to declare the whole counsel of God. Open to your people the apostacy of human nature, the depravity and deceitful workings of the heart, the insufficiency of man's righteousness to justify him before God, and of his power to convert and renew himself. Preach the good will of the Father in laying the plan of salvation; the grace of the Son in giving himself a sacrifice for sin; and the loving-kindness of the Holy Spirit, in effectual calling and sanctification. Set before your hearers their respective duties to God, to their neighbour, and to themselves. When Christ is laid as the foundation, morality is to be built upon it. Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine.

Moreover, in administering the seals of the covenant, baptism and the Lord's supper, you are to convey instruction, by opening the nature and ends of those solemn institutions; and aim to excite and enliven religious affections both in yourself and others.

Take

Take heed to your spirit in the whole of your work and behaviour. Be zealous for the truth. At the same time “ put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and long-suffering.” In all things shew yourself a pattern of good works. And trust in the Lord for ability and success. For it is “ he, who makes able ministers of the New Testament, and gives the increase.”

THIRDLY, I pass on to observe, that faithful ministers of the gospel, for their encouragement and comfort, should consider the honour conferred upon them in being constituted “ the messengers of the Lord of Hosts.”

He who has the hosts of heaven, of earth, and of hell at his command, puts this honour and dignity on some of the children of men. And I trust that you, my dear nephew, are among the number of the Lord’s messengers whom he has appointed and sent to publish his will, and treat with immortal souls about their everlasting concerns. While too many run before they are sent, you are enabled to say to the Lord of the harvest, “ Here am I, send me.”

As you receive your commission and instructions from him, beware of pride and self-applause. Seek the honour which comes from God only. Preach the preaching which he bids you. Give to both sinners and saints their portions respectively. Apply the different parts of divine revelation to the different states and circumstances of the congregation. Thus you will “shew yourself a workman that need not be ashamed, while you rightly divide the word of truth.”

Being constituted a messenger or ambassador of the Lord, as the word is sometimes rendered, in whose name, and by whose authority you speak, you may take encouragement and comfort under all the difficulties and trials which you meet with, from sin, Satan, and a scoffing world. It were no wonder, if at any time you be sorely exercised in your spirit, and harassed by your spiritual adversaries. You may be tempted to think you were never called to the work of the ministry. You may be tempted to resign your office. But remember the gracious promises, “As your days, so shall your strength be; the grace of the Lord
Jesus

Jesus is sufficient for you." And he who has sent you, "will be with you in trouble," and will accept the work of your hands.

Let the eye of your faith be fixed on the fulness of Christ, "in whom are hid all the "treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" and be frequent and fervent in supplications for counsel, for strength and prosperity in your work.

My prayers are for you, that "the Lord may "bless you and keep you. The Lord make his "face to shine upon you, and be gracious to "you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon "you, and give you peace." Amen.

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