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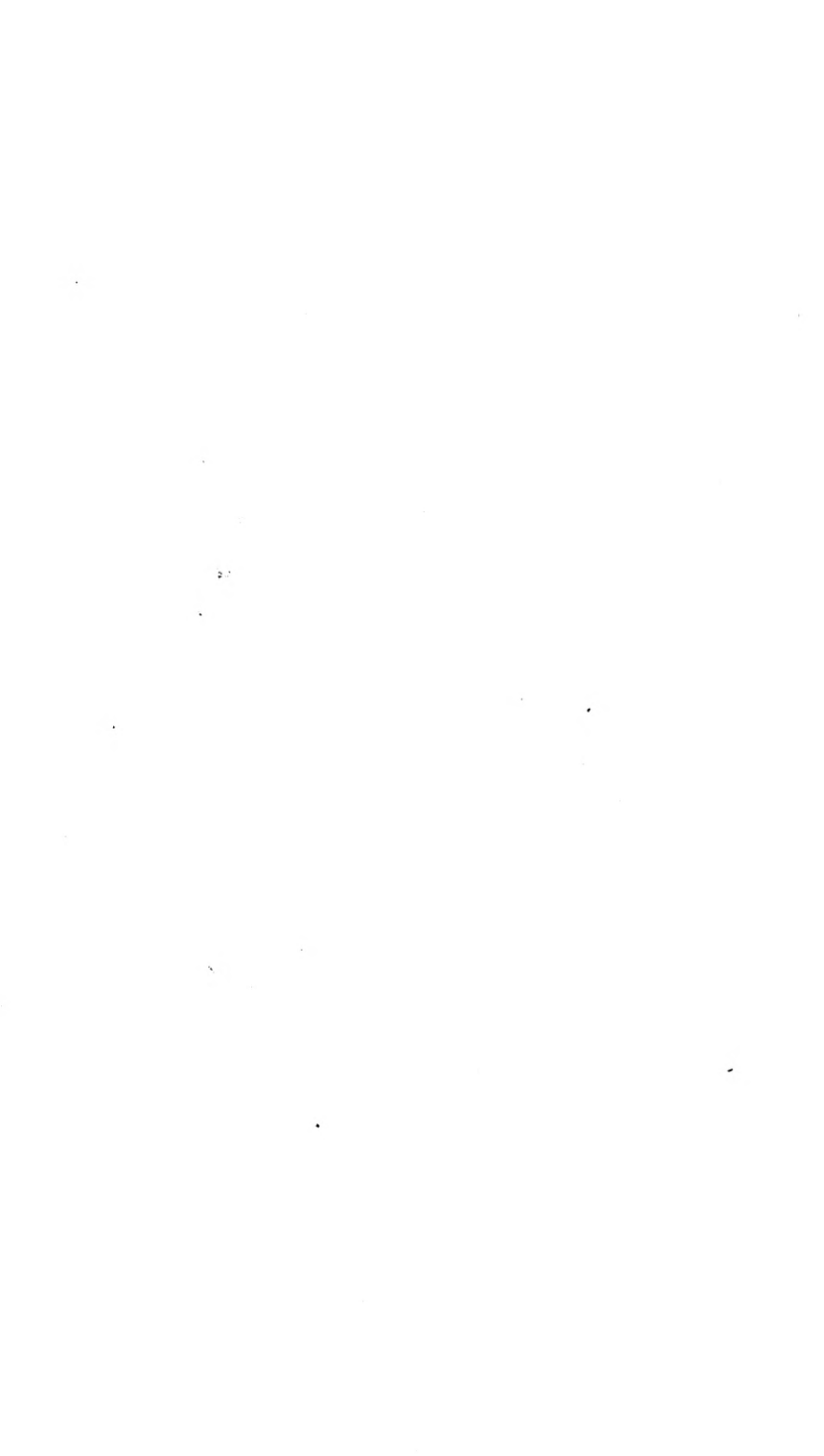
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S E R M O N S

O N

PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

B Y

ROBERT T. WALKER,

LATE ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE  
HIGH CHURCH OF EDINBURGH.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR,

By HUGH BLAIR, D. D.

---

A NEW EDITION.

---

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

V O L. I.

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T O

THE CONGREGATION

O F

THE HIGH CHURCH OF EDINBURGH,

THE FOLLOWING SERMONS

A R E

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

B Y

ROBERT WALKER.

to any which appear in the first or second volumes; and that there is none of them which will not be acceptable to those who loved the Author as a man, or respected him as a Minister of the Gospel. — The eleventh and thirteenth Sermons have been already published separately; the one, in 1748, and the other, in 1775. The Editor flatters himself, that no apology is necessary for inserting them. He wished them to be preserved along with the other Sermons of the Author.

THOUGH there were neither striking incidents, nor much variety in the life of the Author, the following facts will not be unacceptable to his friends.

HE was born in Canongate, where his father was minister, in 1716. He received a regular education at the University of Edinburgh. Happening to reside for a few months in 1737 with a clergyman in Calloway, he was licensed to preach the gospel by the Presbytery of Kirkcudbright. In  
1738,



1738, in consequence of an unanimous call, he was ordained minister of Straiton, within the bounds of the Presbytery of Ayr. He always mentioned this situation with particular satisfaction, and considered the years which he spent at Straiton as among the happiest years of his life. In 1746, he was translated to the Second Charge of South Leith. He was then in the prime of life; and never appeared to greater advantage than while he remained in this station, either in his public labours, or in his private intercourse with his friends. In 1754, he was called to be one of the ministers of Edinburgh; and as there were at that time three vacancies in the city, and he was the *senior* minister among those who were called to supply them, he was immediately fixed in one of the Collegiate Charges of the High Church. The distinguished reputation which he maintained to the end of his life in that conspicuous station, is well known to the public. He had naturally a sound constitution; and enjoyed an uninterrupted series of good

health, till, in the month of February 1782, he was suddenly seized with an apoplexy. He recovered at that time; but his spirits and vigour were greatly impaired. He went to the country in the beginning of the following summer; and his health was so far restored, that he was able to return to his ministerial labours in the month of September. From that time he continued to officiate regularly in public, till death put an end to his labours and to his life together. On Friday the 4th of April 1783, it was his turn to preach in the morning. He left his house in good health, and performed the public service in his usual manner. In the conclusion, he discovered some symptoms of uneasiness; and in his return from the church, said to a friend, that he had got a headach by preaching. Having reached his own house with some difficulty, he was instantly seized with a stupor; and though immediate assistance was procured, he expired in less than two hours.

THE Editor does not presume to delineate

neate his character. This has already been done by a more masterly hand. The Reverend Dr BLAIR, who has given many other testimonies of respect for the memory of his deceased colleague, has been so obliging as to permit the publication of the concluding part of his sermon, preached on the 13th of April 1783; for which the Editor takes this public opportunity of expressing his best and most grateful acknowledgments.

CONCLUSION of SERMON from *Eccl. xii. 7.*  
*preached in the High Church of Edinburgh,*  
 by Dr HUGH BLAIR, 13th April 1783,  
*on occasion of the death of Mr ROBERT*  
 WALKER.

— AFTER what has been said on the subject of death in general, and in particular upon the uncertainty of the time of it, your minds must naturally have turned towards that melancholy event which has lately befallen, in the sudden removal of your faithful and worthy Pastor; and you will easily imagine, that this has given occasion to the train of meditation we have now been pursuing. Upon such an occasion, I know this Congregation will indulge me, in paying the last tribute of respect to the memory of a colleague whom I esteemed and loved; and in connection with whom I have comfortably past a great part of my life. He was the acquaintance and com-  
 panion

panion of my youth. For nearly the period of twenty-five years we were associated in the charge of this Congregation; and during all that long tract of time, though we often differed in sentiment about public matters, yet that difference never interrupted our cordial correspondence, nor occasioned any breach of mutual friendship. The character of his mind, indeed, was such as fitted him for agreeable intercourse with all who had any connection with him. His understanding was sound and just. His passions, though originally strong; were brought under remarkable government. His disposition was cheerful: his temper calm and regular. God had blessed him with great natural abilities. To a quick and solid judgement, were added the powers of the most correct taste, which he enjoyed in a high and uncommon degree. Seldom have any been endowed with a more just discernment of what is beautiful in composition and discourse, or with a more accurate sensibility to what is becoming in manners and behaviour. Posses-

ing these talents, he was at the same time modest, unassuming, unpretending. He was simple in his manners; simple in his taste of life; altogether free from ostentation or vanity. A manly firmness formed the distinguishing part of his character. As he acted uniformly upon principle, he was bold and undaunted in maintaining what he judged to be right; but without the heat of violence or passion. No man ever possessed a more independent spirit. About the advantages of worldly fortune he was little solicitous. He formed no high views. He made no ambitious claims. He was easily contented and satisfied; and as he was entirely free from covetousness, so he was a stranger to envy. To the merit of others he was ever disposed to do justice. His eye was not evil when they prospered. He was superior to the little competitions and jealousies which prevail in vulgar minds.

THESE particulars, relating to his character as a man, I am thoroughly qualified,

fied, from my long personal knowledge of him, fully to ascertain. With regard to his public labours, my testimony is of less consequence to those before whom I now speak, who have so long had full proof of his talents, and experience of his assiduity and fidelity in the ministry of the gospel. There, indeed, he appeared in his highest character, as an eminent and successful labourer in the Lord's vineyard. To this important work his greatest application was bent. With this, he allowed nothing else to interfere. His whole ambition centered in acting his part with the dignity and propriety that became the sacred character which he bore. By the elegance, neatness, and chaste simplicity of composition in his Sermons, and by the uncommon grace and energy of his delivery, he rose to a high and justly acquired reputation. But mere reputation was not his object. He aimed at *testifying the whole counsel of the grace of God*; at *dividing rightly to every man the word of truth*; instructing the ignorant, awakening the careles,

careless, reproving the sinner, and comforting the faint; as all who belong to this Congregation well know.

SUITABLE to such a life were the manner and circumstances of his death. It pleased Providence to carry him away as in a moment, from the discharge of that work in which he delighted, to the enjoyment of its reward. His death was like an immediate translation from the work of the sanctuary on earth to the employments of the sanctuary above. He was permitted to escape, in a great degree, from the melancholy approaches of the last foe. He endured no long continuance of pain. He underwent no violent struggle. The garment of mortality easily dropt off; and the servant of God fell asleep in the Lord. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the latter end of that man is peace. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; they rest from their labours, and their works follow them. May the memorial of the just remain with us in everlasting remembrance! Let us remember*



*remember them that have spoken unto us the words of God. Let us be followers of them who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises. Let us live the life of the righteous, that we may die his death, and our latter end, like his, may be blessed!*

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# S E R M O N I.

Preached in the High Church of Edinburgh, May 5. 1761.  
at the opening of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale.

I THESSALONIANS, iii. 8.

*For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.*

**T**HE author of this epistle is introduced into the sacred history with other sentiments and views than these words express. He makes his first appearance at a scene of blood, consenting to the death of a holy martyr, and keeping the raiment of them that slew him. Soon after, we hear of him making havock of the Church of Christ in Jerufalem, entering into every house, and dragging both men and women to prison. Nay, such was the excess and fury of his zeal, that, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the dis-

ciples of the Lord, he persecuted them even unto strange cities: "I verily thought," said he, in the presence of Agrippa, "that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."—But here we behold *a new creature* indeed! What things were formerly gain to Paul, these he counts loss for Christ: the once hated name of Jesus is now become dearer to him than life itself; and he who in times past persecuted the saints, now glories in the cross, and preacheth the faith he had endeavoured to destroy.

In my text, he discovers a temper of most distinguished excellence; a temper, my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, which I hope we shall not barely applaud, but earnestly covet and endeavour, by the grace of God, to possess.

To unfold the peculiar excellence of this temper,—and to illustrate the importance of it to the ministers of Christ,—are the purposes aimed at in the following discourse.

THE *first* thing that demands our attention



tion is the amiable temper expressed in these words: *Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.*

The general meaning of the passage is obvious: It contains an obliging and spirited declaration of the Apostle's good-will to the Christians at Theſſalonica. But if we attend to his ſituation when he wrote this epiſtle, and place ourſelves in the circumſtances of thoſe to whom it was addreſſed, we ſhall feel an emphasis in the word *now*, that gives a ſurpriſing addition both to the tenderneſs and dignity of his ſentiment and expreſſion.

Had the time referred to been a ſeaſon of proſperity; had Paul, in the height of worldly felicity, meant no more than to aſſure the Theſſalonians, that, amidſt all his affluence, he kindly remembered them; and though at preſent beyond the need of wiſhing any thing for himſelf, yet that the report of their ſtedfaſtneſs, and the hope of its continuance, had made a conſiderable addition to his happineſs, and heightened his reliſh of the good things he poſſeſſed: even upon this ſuppoſition, I ap-

prehend, the particle *now* would justly be deemed emphatical, and worthy to be accented.

But with what force must it strike us, when we find that it refers to a season of adversity! ——— Paul, at the time of writing this epistle, was a poor, afflicted, solitary man; banished from his friends, living among strangers, labouring with his own hands for a scanty subsistence, and destitute of almost every earthly comfort.

All this the Thessalonians knew full well. With grief they had beheld his sufferings in their own city, when “the unbelieving  
“ Jews, moved with envy, took unto them  
“ certain lewd fellows of the baser sort,” and raised such an uproar, as obliged them to send him away by night into Berea. They further knew, that the same unbelieving and envious Jews, upon hearing that he preached with success at Berea, had followed him thither also, and so inflamed the multitude against him, that he found it necessary to retire as far as Athens, to get beyond the reach of his unrelenting persecutors.

utors.—Judge then with what emotion they would read this strong; this endearing profession of his concern for their welfare; *they* who, under God, owed their conversion to his ministry, and to whom, as I just now observed, his past sufferings on their own account, and his present distress, were perfectly known.

He had told them a little before, that the bitterest ingredient in all his afflictions, was the apprehension he had, that his sufferings might have a tendency to shake their faith, and to prejudice their minds against the gospel of Christ: “For this cause,” says he, “I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain. But when Timotheus returned, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, we were comforted over you, in all our affliction and distress, by your faith.” And then he adds, “*For now,*” even at this present time, distressed and afflicted as we are, yet “*now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.*”

Here then the purest zeal for the honour of his Master, and the most generous love to the souls of men, are happily united, and feelingly expressed in the native language of a warm and upright heart. —I say, the *purest* zeal and the most *generous* love; for no tincture of selfishness appears in either: if Christ is glorified,—if men are saved,—Paul obtains his utmost wish; his happiness is independent of every thing else; he enjoys all that in his own estimation is worthy to be accounted life, if his spiritual children stand fast in the Lord.

And is not this a temper of most distinguished excellence? When I called it *amiable*, I only spoke the half of its praise: it hath a *dignity*, as well as a beauty, belonging to it, superior to any thing that is commonly celebrated by that name among men. Would we behold *heroism* in its fairest and most exalted form, instead of looking for it among those whom the world hath stiled *heroes*, we shall succeed far better if we turn our eyes to Paul of Tarsus.

Where shall we find such determined  
courage,

courage, such cool intrepidity, and contempt of danger, as in this good and faithful soldier of Christ? “Behold,” said he to the elders of the church at Ephesus, “Behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” *Acts* xx. 22.

With what invincible fortitude did he triumph over adversity in every frightful shape! with what noble freedom, and independence of spirit, did he exult amidst those sufferings of which human nature hath the greatest abhorrence! “Even unto this hour,” says he in his letters to the Corinthians, “we both hunger and thirst, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place: we are made as the filth

“ all things unto this day.—We are  
 “ troubled on every side, yet not distressed ;  
 “ we are perplexed, but not in despair ;  
 “ persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down,  
 “ but not destroyed : —as deceivers, and  
 “ yet true ; as unknown, and yet well  
 “ known ; as dying, and behold we live ;  
 “ as chastened, and not killed ; as sorrow-  
 “ ful, yet always rejoicing ; as poor, yet  
 “ making many rich ; as having nothing,  
 “ and yet possessing all things.”

And what was it that supported and en-  
 livened his mind, under such a load of  
 complicated distress ? Hear the account he  
 gave of it to Timothy, which exactly agrees  
 with the declaration in my text : “ I en-  
 “ dure all things for the elect’s sake, that  
 “ they also may obtain the salvation which  
 “ is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory,”  
 2 *Tim.* ii. 10.—Paul denied himself for the  
 good of others, and cheerfully renounced  
 every temporal interest to promote the eter-  
 nal happiness of men.

With what a graceful mixture of majesty  
 and meekness does he appeal to the Thessa-  
 lonians, in the foregoing part of this epistle !

“ Our

“ Our exhortation was not of deceit, nor  
“ of uncleannesse, nor in guile : but as we  
“ were allowed of God to be put in trust  
“ with the gospel, even so we speak, not as  
“ pleasing men, but God, which trieth our  
“ hearts. For neither at any time used we  
“ flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak  
“ of covetousness ; God is witness : nor of  
“ men sought we glory, neither of you,  
“ nor yet of others. But we were gentle  
“ among you, even as a nurse cherisheth  
“ her children : so, being affectionately de-  
“ sirous of you, we were willing to have  
“ imparted unto you, not the gospel only,  
“ but our own souls also, because ye were  
“ dear to us. For what is our hope, our  
“ joy, our crown of rejoicing ? are not even  
“ ye, in the presence of our Lord Jesus  
“ Christ at his coming ? for ye are our glory  
“ and joy.”

And what can attract our love, what can merit our esteem, what can excite our admiration, if such a temper doth not ? A temper which, to all the magnanimity of the hero, unites all the piety and benevolence of the faint.

But

But it will not avail us barely to esteem or admire this temper: it is necessary, my brethren, that we ourselves be possessed of it. I shall therefore proceed, as I proposed, in the

*Second place,* To illustrate the importance of this excellent temper;—the peculiar importance of it to the ministers of Christ. And,

*1<sup>st</sup>,* It is of importance to guard us against that self-deceit to which, of all men in the world, we are most exposed. The office we hold removes us at a greater distance than other men from any of those temptations to gross and scandalous sins, which wound the conscience, and divulge the secret corruptions of the heart: so that mere decency of conduct may pass with us for real sanctity; and what is purely the effect of restraint from without, may be mistaken by us for the product of a new nature within. Besides, the stated duties that belong to our office frequently contribute to cherish this presumption. God may enable us to deliver his message with becoming



becoming warmth and propriety, for the sake of those committed to our care; and his word, though uttered by unhallowed lips, may enter with power and efficacy into the hearts of our hearers. It is an awful truth, that if we measure ourselves either by our manner of performing, or even by the effects that follow, our public ministrations, we shall often be liable to err very fatally. Paul thought it possible that one might preach to the saving of others, and after all be a *cast-away*; and I can easily conceive, that the preaching to others may, through want of attention on our part, be in some measure the cause of it. The assistance afforded us in our Master's work, may lead us to form a better opinion of our spiritual condition than is either reasonable or safe; and therefore we have greater need to look frequently and narrowly into our own hearts, lest the gifts we receive for the use of the church, should pass with us for those peculiar graces of the Spirit which prove our adoption into the family of God, and manifest our title to the heavenly inheritance.

But

But did our souls burn with that fervent zeal for the glory of God, and that vehement thirst for the salvation of men, which fired the generous breast of this Apostle, we should be in no danger of judging too favourably of ourselves. Such high aims would cause our most vigorous efforts to appear so little in our own eyes, that, instead of yielding fuel to our pride, they would rather afford us matter of self-abasement, as bearing no proportion either to the duty we owe, or the exalted felicity to which we aspire.—Conscious of our weakness, how earnestly should we then address God for the influences of his Spirit, to aid us in our work, and to impart virtue and efficacy to the means we employ!—And, at the same time, with what holy severity should we examine the most secret recesses of our hearts, lest any root of bitterness should find indulgence there, that might either unfit us for service, or marr our usefulness, by provoking God to withhold that grace upon which both our ability and success depend!

*2dly*, The importance of this temper will  
further

further appear from the influence it would have upon our public ministrations.—It would make us better preachers, as well as better men.

We should never be at a loss for proper subjects of discourse.—This, you must be sensible, is not always the case: most of us, I suppose, will have the candour to acknowledge, that we have frequently spent more time in seeking a text, than might reasonably have sufficed to compose a sermon: and we shall probably find, upon a fair recollection, that this waste of time has happened most commonly when we set out in preparing for our public work, with no other view than to make a sermon.—Fancy is a roving capricious guide; but when necessity prescribes, it always speaks with precision. We may know with certainty what our people need, when we can only imperfectly guess at what will please them: so that, did the necessities of our hearers get the disposal of our studies, we should seldom hesitate long in the choice of our subjects; and give me leave to add, we should more frequently preach the same

ne-

necessary truths, and press them from time to time with redoubled earnestness, till they appeared to have obtained their full effect upon the hearts of those committed to our care.

Nor is this all:—The temper I am recommending would assist us in forming and pronouncing our sermons, no less than in choosing the most profitable subjects.—As it would reject all useless unedifying speculations, so it would effectually banish those gaudy ornaments which too often put the preacher in the place of his text; or, as one hath well expressed it, serve only to evaporate weighty truths, and to make them appear as light as the style.—Had we no other aim than to guide our hearers in the way to heaven, perspicuity and persuasion would then become the sole objects of our attention; and these, I apprehend, are more within every man's reach than is commonly imagined. I never knew any person much at a loss, feelingly and intelligibly to impart to others what he greatly feared, or loved, or hated. Rules of art have their use: but though art hath collected rules, it  
was

was nature that furnished them: both order and elocution are the offspring of a warm and understanding heart. Let us only feel to purpose, and then we shall speak with propriety and energy.—Did we, like Paul, *travail as in birth till Christ were formed in the souls of men*, would not our tongue be as the pen of a ready writer?—Did we consider that we speak in the name of God;—that we speak to the creatures of God;—*to them*, I say, and not merely *before them*;—that we publish those truths by which only they can be saved,—and proclaim that law by which they shall be judged:—did we consider that they and we are fast hastening to judgement, and that neither of us can know how soon the summons of removal may be put into our hands:—what shall I say?—would not Elihu's situation become ours, when he thus expressed himself, “ I am  
“ full of matter, the spirit within me con-  
“ straineth me: behold, my belly is as wine  
“ that hath no vent; it is ready to burst  
“ like new bottles; I will speak that I may  
“ be refreshed?” *Job xxxii. 18, 19, 20.*  
Nay, my brethren, with such great objects  
in

in our eye, we should not only speak, but we should speak as Elihu resolved to do in the following part of the quotation, we should speak with an honest and impartial freedom; for thus he goes on: “ Let me  
 “ not, I pray you, accept any man’s person,  
 “ neither let me give flattering titles unto  
 “ man; for I know not to give flattering  
 “ titles; in so doing, my Maker would soon  
 “ take me away.”

*3dly*, This temper would likewise have a happy influence upon all the parts of our external conduct.—We should not think it enough to abstain from evil; we should carefully avoid every thing that had the appearance of evil, that our conduct might have nothing in it of a doubtful nature, nothing ambiguous, or that needed to be explained.—He lives, alas! at a poor rate, and far below the dignity of his sacred office, who is frequently put to it to vindicate his conduct, and to prove that he hath not exceeded his Christian liberty. A minister of Christ ought to go before his people in every thing that is true, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. His light ought to *shine*

in the eyes of men; nay, to shine with such strength, that they may *see* his good works, and be constrained to glorify his Father in heaven.

A holy life is the most persuasive sermon, expressed too in a language which men of all nations equally understand. It even explains what other sermons mean, instead of needing to be explained by them. Men will see more beauty in a truly virtuous action, than in the most rhetorical description we can give of it; and then they lose no time, for they see it at once: whereas, besides the necessary expence of time, much skill and address must likewise be employed, to unfold it in such a manner as to make it thoroughly understood and relished.

In this way, my brethren, we may preach without ceasing: and if we know any thing of the temper expressed in my text, we shall certainly be ambitious to hold forth the word of life continually; and so to exhibit the religion of Jesus, that, in our practice, all who behold us may have an easy opportunity of reading the laws of Christ every day.

More particularly: Were we possessed of this temper, we should equally disdain to court the great by a fawning fervility, or to catch the vulgar by a low popularity.

These are the dangerous extremes into one or other of which every unprincipled minister is liable to be seduced.

The last of them, which is reputed the most base and contemptible, is commonly the resort of those only, who, having little to recommend them to the wise and good, can find no other way to emerge from obscurity, and to thrust themselves forward into public view; for no man will stoop to this mean compliance, who is qualified to act in a higher sphere, if he is not forced to it by hard necessity, either to cover a sore he wishes to conceal, or to bribe men to wink at some criminal indulgence, which he cannot hide, and is unwilling to forsake.—But though the other extreme is generally supposed to be less ignominious; yet, when weighed in a just balance, I apprehend it will be found at least equally mean, and in some respects far more pernicious.

The popular drudge must always assume the



the appearance of sanctity: he must declaim strenuously against vice, and study to have his outward behaviour decent and irreproachable.—Thus far the gratification of his favourite passion will constrain him to plead the cause of religion, and to say and do many things which may have a good effect upon the multitude, whose favourable regard he is anxious to obtain.—And though his low ambition may, upon some occasions, prompt him to take advantage of their weakness, by inflaming their zeal about matters of a trivial or indifferent nature; yet, as he can only succeed in this attempt by persuading them that such things are important and necessary, it is obvious, that however he may impose upon their understanding, and give them stones instead of bread, yet he cannot be said to corrupt their integrity, neither doth he weaken the authority of conscience.—He may render them ridiculous, but he doth not make them knaves.

Whereas the smiles and rewards of political rulers (for these are the great ones of whom

whom I now speak), are usually courted and obtained by very different means.

As a supple complying temper, unfettered by conscience, or even a regard to decency, too often proves the best recommendation to their service; hence it is, that many who are candidates for their favour, are so far from assuming an air of sanctity, that they studiously avoid whatever can be deemed the peculiarities of their order, that they may have nothing to distinguish them from the men of the world, or to render them suspected of the remotest disposition, either to canvass the commands of their superiors, or to boggle at any measures they shall please to adopt.

The pernicious tendency of such an infamous plan of conduct is too apparent to need much illustration.—Hereby they withhold from their patrons the most convincing and obvious proof of the reality, the excellence, and the efficacy of that religion which the office they hold obliges them to preach.—Description and argument, if they are not accompanied with a visible representation of holiness, will make  
but

but a feeble impression upon those who are continually beset with the snares of prosperity.—Besides, it often happens, that such persons, by means of a liberal education, are in great measure placed, (if I may so speak) beyond the reach of sermons: they have already got a theory of religion into their heads, and are not likely to hear any thing they knew not before; so that they need striking examples more than verbal instructions.—These, and these only, are of sufficient force to rouse their attention, and to carry home conviction to their hearts with power.

Did they behold men of moderate, or rather of scanty fortunes, unbiaſſed by worldly hopes or fears, consistent and uniform in their whole behaviour, resolute in every part of duty, inflexibly honest, and fortified against all corrupt influence whatsoever;—such venerable, though imperfect images of God, would not only penetrate, but overawe their souls.

A holy and upright minister of Christ never fails to possess a secret dominion in the hearts of those who are of the most

opposite character. Hate him they may, and probably will; but at the same time they are constrained to reverence and esteem him: even “ Herod feared John, and ob-  
“ served him, and did many things,” be-  
cause he knew “ that he was a just and holy  
“ man.”

Whereas, on the other hand, when they see those who are clothed with the sacred character, paying no regard at all to propriety of conduct, but mixing with the world, and living at large as other men do; when they see them grasping at power, or scrambling for riches; spreading their sails to every wind, and ready to embark in any cause that can recommend them to those who are able to gratify their ambition or covetousness: — however they may avail themselves of their treason, yet surely they must despise such traitors in their heart, and look upon them as the dregs and refuse of human kind.

But, alas! strange as it may seem, it seldom happens that these perfidious men become so thoroughly contemptible as to be altogether harmless. Even they who  
despise

despise them most, with a perverse and fatal subtilty, make their example an occasion of hardening their own hearts; fetching arguments from thence to extenuate their guilt, and to cherish their presumptuous hopes of impunity: for it has often been observed, that no twig is so slender that a wicked man will not cling to it, when he feels himself sinking under the rebukes of conscience, and the overwhelming fears of approaching vengeance.

It is surely unnecessary to shew, that the temper I have been recommending would effectually guard us against both the pernicious extremes I have been speaking of, and render us equally independent of the *high* and of the *low*.——Zeal for the honour of our Lord, and the salvation of precious and immortal souls, would ennoble our minds, and break every slavish yoke in pieces. A true minister of Christ will *call no man Master*: like this great Apostle, he will endeavour so to speak, and so to act, in every situation, not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth the heart. It will ever appear a small matter

to him to be judged of man's judgement: this will be his labour, his only ambition, that " present or absent, he may be accepted of his Lord." Which leads me to observe, in the

*4th* and *last* place, That the importance of this temper shall be fully understood and felt by us all at the hour of death, and in the day of judgement.

We must shortly sicken and die:—that awful period can be at no great distance from any of us:—it may be nearer to some of us than we are aware of.—Let us consider it as present;—and say, my Fathers and Brethren, were this the last day, the last hour, the last moment of life, what would support us best? what would yield us the most effectual consolation?—I need not wait for an answer; every heart must have made it already.—The only triumph of a dying minister is that which Paul uttered when the time of his departure was at hand: " I have fought a good  
 " fight, I have finished my course, I have  
 " kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid  
 " up for me a crown of righteousness,  
 " which

“ which God, the righteous Judge, shall  
“ give me at that day.”—He who can  
say with this holy Apostle, “ To me to  
“ live is Christ,” he, and he only, can  
with him subjoin, “ and to die is gain.”  
*If now we live when believers stand fast in  
the Lord*; if to promote the honour of our  
Master, and the salvation of our brethren,  
be the objects of our keenest desires and  
most vigorous pursuit, death can do us no  
harm: we may cheerfully look beyond  
the grave to those pure regions of ever-  
lasting light, and love, and joy; where  
“ they that be wise, shall shine as the  
“ brightness of the firmament; and they  
“ that turn many unto righteousness, as  
“ the stars for ever and ever.” Animated  
by these hopes, let us henceforth go on  
with fidelity and zeal in performing every  
part of duty that belongs to us: and  
“ though Israel be not gathered by our  
“ means, yet shall we be glorious in the  
“ eyes of the Lord, and our God shall be  
“ our strength.” He who graciously ac-  
cepteth according to what a man hath,  
will not reject “ our labour of love;” but  
will

will confefs us at laft before an affembled world; and fay, with all the indulgence of a kind and liberal Mafter, “ Well done, “ good and faithful fervants, enter ye into “ the joy of your Lord.” *Amen.*

S E R-



## S E R M O N II.

PROVERBS, xv. 3.

*The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*

**I**N every age of the church the complaint may be repeated, that “all men have not faith.” Many who think they have it, are fatally deceived; and shall be found in the issue to have been utterly devoid of this gracious principle. True faith determines the choice, and governs the practice according to the nature of the thing believed. It is called “the evidence,” or demonstration, “of things not seen.” Let the objects be ever so remote, yet faith brings them near to the mind, and renders them as powerful and operative upon the affections and will, as if they were both present and visible. Such is the nature  
and

and efficacy of this grace; from whence you may judge, whether it be so common as men are apt to imagine.

The subject of my text will afford us a striking illustration of this remark.—We have already professed our belief, and we have done it too with some solemnity, that *the eyes of the Lord are in this place, beholding the evil and the good.* This we virtually acknowledged when we celebrated his praise: but we did it most explicitly when we offered up our prayers to him; for to what purpose should we pray to an absent, or even to an inattentive being? Yet if we examine ourselves impartially, and try our faith by the only proper test, I suspect we shall find too much reason to conclude, either that we do not seriously believe this doctrine, or, at best, that our faith is very weak and imperfect.

Were God visibly present in our assembly;—were the great Immanuel, God in our nature, standing in the midst of us; would we praise him so feebly, or pray to him so coldly, or speak and hear so unfeelingly as we do?—And shall seeing, or  
not

not seeing, make such an odds?—Did we just now behold the object of our worship, would the mere shutting our eyes render his presence less venerable, or the influence of it less powerful? No, my brethren:—our seeing God could only assure us that he is present; and if an equal assurance is obtained by any other means, the influence of his presence will in either case be the same. It is not therefore to the seeing or not seeing God, that any difference in our temper or behaviour must be imputed; but to the believing, or not believing, the reality of his presence: from which we may justly infer, that every degree of irreverence in our minds, and every undutiful step in our conduct, is a symptom of the weakness and imperfection of our faith; and, consequently, that a course of known sin, or the habitual indulgence of any corrupt affection, affords undoubted evidence, that whatever light we may have in our understanding, yet we do not believe with our heart, that *the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*

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When these things are considered, it will appear that infidelity, in one degree or other, is far more prevalent than we are aware of; and that, notwithstanding our professional assent to the doctrine of my text, yet the best of us have need to get our faith of this interesting truth enlivened and confirmed. I shall therefore proceed to lay the evidence of it before you, in as plain and convincing a manner as I can; imploring, in the entrance, that powerful blessing, without which the strongest and most persuasive arguments, like a dart thrown by a weak arm, will either fall short of the heart, or if they reach it, yet strike so feebly, as to make no deep or lasting impression.

There are two judges, before one or other of which every question of this kind must necessarily be tried; I mean, *Scripture*, and *Reason*.—Scripture must determine those who confess its divine original; and they who decline the authority of this judge, can appeal to none other but that reason with which God hath endowed them; there they must stop, the cause can be carried no where else.

elfe.—If therefore it shall appear, that the doctrine of God's universal presence and knowledge is supported both by scripture and reason, the question will be finally decided, and unbelief can have no resource but perverse and wilful obstinacy.

*First*, then, This doctrine is plainly taught and repeatedly asserted in the sacred writings.

The testimony of my text is clear and strong: *The eyes of the Lord are in every place.*—They not only “run to and fro throughout the earth,” as it is elsewhere expressed; which form of speech might leave room to suppose that God beholds things successively, looking first at one object, and afterwards at another; but they are in every place at the same time. How awful are the words of Elihu! (*Job xxxiv. 21.*) “His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.”

Nor is his attention confined to “the  
“ ways

“ways of man,” by which is commonly meant his outward behaviour; he looks immediately into his heart, and sees the inward frame and tendency of his soul: for “all things are naked, and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do, even the thoughts and intents of the heart.” “Man looketh on the outward appearance,” said Samuel; “but the Lord looketh on the heart.” He needs no information from our actions; he looketh directly on the heart, out of which are the issues of life. Nay, “Hell and destruction are before the Lord, how much more the hearts of the children of men?” *Prov. xv. 11.*

Neither do the scriptures represent him as a mere spectator, but as a witness and judge, who ponders the thought and action with all their circumstances, and makes a just and righteous estimation of them: “I know, and am a witness, saith the Lord.” —“The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.”—Nay, he weighs the spirits: “All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, but the  
“ Lord

“ Lord weigheth the spirits,” *Prov.* xvi. 2. He as it were puts them into a balance so exactly poised, that the smallest grain will turn the scale.

Farther,—the Scriptures not only ascribe to God the most unlimited and unerring knowledge, but they even render it absurd to suppose the contrary : for how extensive, how spiritual, are his commandments ! they reach to every part of our conduct ; and not only direct the outward life, but give law to the most retired thought and inward affection. Thus we are told, (*Prov.* xxiv. 9.) that “ the thought of foolishness is sin ;” and the tenth commandment forbids to covet ; hereby giving life and spirit to all the former precepts ; and teaching us, as our Saviour afterwards explained them in his sermon upon the mount, that they include the inward disposition, as well as the outward action ; and not only prohibit external violence, injustice, falsehood, and sensuality ; but heart-hatred, causeless or excessive anger, envy, resentment ; in short, the first conception of lust in the soul, as well as the birth of the sinful deed. And can any

suppose that God, whose wisdom is perfect, would give laws to his creatures, with the most awful penalties annexed to the transgression of them, if, after all, it behoved him to be ignorant, in many cases, whether these penalties were incurred or not?—No, surely.——The spirituality of the law is a full proof by itself, that the knowledge of the Lawgiver must extend to our thoughts, no less than to our words; and that the darkest corners of the heart lie open to his view, as much as the most public actions of the life.

Nay, which completes this part of the evidence, we find God actually judging mens hearts, and rewarding or punishing them according to their secret dispositions. Thus it is written of Amaziah, (*2 Chron. xxv. 2.*) that “he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but he did it not with a perfect heart.”—David is applauded for his good intention to build a house for the Lord, though he was not permitted to execute his design: “Thou didst well,” said God, “in that it was in thine heart!”—And Abijah, the son of Jeroboam, obtained

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ed an honourable exemption from that violent death, and want of burial, to which the rest of that wicked family were doomed; for this express reason, “ Because in him there  
 “ was found some good thing toward the  
 “ Lord God of Israel.” 1 *Kings* xiv. 13.—  
 Upon the whole, then, you see how clearly and explicitly the Scriptures decide in favour of this doctrine, that *the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.* Let us now inquire, in the

*Second* place, What Reason teacheth us concerning this matter. And here I shall argue from such principles as all men are agreed in,—Atheists excepted, and these are not parties to the cause in issue.—Surely none of us will hesitate to acknowledge, that God is the Creator, the Preserver, the Governor, and the Judge of the world.—Now, if in each of these essential characters of the Deity, we shall find a separate proof of God’s perfect knowledge; how irresistible must the evidence be when they are all united, and with what powerful conviction must it come into our hearts!—

Let us then consider them apart, and try how far they can lead us in this important inquiry.

In the *first* place, I apprehend, that such knowledge as the Scriptures ascribe to God, will be found inseparably connected with the character of Creator. Is it not reasonable to conclude, that he who made man, and endowed him with the faculty of knowing, possesseth in himself a very perfect knowledge? nay, must we not conclude, that his knowledge is as far superior to ours, as his nature is exalted above ours?—Here, then, Reason leads us, by two very easy steps, to attribute to God an infinite knowledge, at least a knowledge that we can no more limit than we can do the Divine Nature itself.

The inspired author of the 94th Psalm addressed this argument to the infidels in his day, who scoffingly said, “ The Lord  
“ shall not see, neither shall the God of  
“ Jacob regard it.—Understand, ye brutish  
“ among the people: and ye fools, when  
“ will ye be wise? He that planted the ear,  
“ shall he not hear? he that formed the  
“ eye

“ eye, shall he not see? he that teacheth  
 “ man knowledge, shall not ‘he know?’  
 —To the same purpose Isaiah speaks,  
 (*Isaiab*, xxix. 15, 16.) “ Wo unto them that  
 “ seek deep to hide their counsel from the  
 “ Lord, and their works are in the dark;  
 “ and they say, Who seeth us, and who  
 “ knoweth us? Surely your turning of things  
 “ upside down shall be esteemed as the pot-  
 “ ter’s clay: for shall the work say of him  
 “ that made it, He made me not? or shall  
 “ the thing framed say of him that framed  
 “ it, He had no understanding?”—In both  
 these passages, the omniscience of God is  
 rationally deduced from these obvious dic-  
 tates of natural religion;—that we are the  
 creatures of God,—and that we derive from  
 him all the faculties we possess:—And the  
 conclusion appears so just and necessary, that  
 no objection occurs to me by which the  
 force of it can be evaded. But this argu-  
 ment acquires an additional strength when  
 we consider, in the

2<sup>d</sup>, place, That he is not only our Creator,  
 but likewise our Preserver; for “ in him  
 “ we live and move.” The same power that

brought us into being, is continually exercised in supporting our being; nor can we live independent of God for one moment. Try your strength in the easiest matters;—try if you can “make one hair white or “black.” and when you have found yourselves unable for that which is least, let this convince you, that you are far less able to do so great a thing as to support and prolong life itself.

Is the ability to move at all, then, constantly derived from God; and can any man dream, that God hath given him power to remove to such a distance, that his own eye cannot reach him?—Doth he enable us to think, and shall we exclude him from the knowledge of these thoughts, which we have no power to form, but what we receive from him? The absurdity is so glaring, that Reason must at once reject it with disdain.

*3dly*, Unless *the eyes of the Lord* were in every place, how could he execute what belongs to the Governor of the world? Can he order things aright which he doth not see? Or must his work lie unfinished in one  
part

part of his dominions, till he hath gone to perfect it in another? Or shall he carry it on by delegates, as weak and finite creatures are obliged to do? It were blasphemy to think so. With infinite ease doth he govern the world he hath made: and as he created all things in number, weight, and measure, so he disposeth all things according to the rules of the most perfect wisdom, justice, and goodness. And whatever objections may arise from a partial view of his administration, so that in some cases we may be tempted to say in our hearts, "How doth God know, and is there knowledge in the Most High?" yet Reason teacheth us in general, that the Lord reigneth, who is wise in heart, and mighty in strength; and that when clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgement are the habitation of his throne. But this could not be without the most certain and unlimited knowledge of all his creatures, at all times, and in every place and condition. How should he conduct this great family, which constantly hangs upon him, without the most intimate acquaintance with every

individual? And how strong must our conviction of this truth be, when we consider, that his providence extends to the minutest things? that “the very hairs of our heads are numbered;” that “a sparrow doth not fall to the ground without him;” and that “when the lot is cast into the lap, the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.”

But the *4th* and most striking argument for the truth of this doctrine arises from this principle, which sober Reason hath always admitted, *viz.* That God is the Judge of the world: for as he is to decide the final state of men, and distribute rewards and punishments according to the strictest equity, so that every mouth shall be stopped, and none shall be able to charge him with rigour or undue severity; the trial must be fair and open, and the proof absolutely clear, upon which a sentence, so essentially connected with the honour of the Judge, is to be founded. But how shall this proof be obtained? shall men be adduced as witnesses against each other?— This scheme is encumbered with two objections;

jections; neither of which, I think, can be easily removed.—If all are guilty, would there not be ground to suspect, that every one's private interest might bring them to a general combination and agreement to conceal each other's faults?—Or, if some are innocent, which for once we shall suppose, yet even these may, or rather must, be ignorant of many things: they can attest no more than they have seen; and their testimony, at the utmost, can only relate to outward actions; the temper with which they are done, and the principles from whence they flow, are beyond their knowledge: so that no judgement can pass upon the heart in consequence of any human evidence.—Where then shall we go next? Perhaps you will say, that every man's own conscience shall witness against him in that day. But what should oblige conscience to do this? will mere authority compel a man to become his own accuser, when he knows that no other evidence can be brought against him? This, I think, is harder to be believed than any thing. In short, I see no way

way by which we can extricate ourselves from these pressing difficulties, but by ascribing to God that perfect and universal knowledge, which my text, and sundry other scriptures, attribute to him. Reason must have recourse to this at last, or deny that God shall judge the world. It is his omniscience that supplies the room of foreign witnesses, or makes their testimony valid: it is his omniscience that overawes conscience, and constrains it to be faithful: He alone can tell a man what is in his heart, so that he dare not refuse the charge: and it is this infallible testimony of the Judge himself, who scans all actions, who weighs all thoughts, whose right hand doth ever hold us, and whose eye is constantly upon us, that will stop every mouth in the great day of decision, and convince the whole world, that his judgement is true and righteous.

Thus have I endeavoured to establish your faith of this important truth, that *the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*—I have argued the cause at the bar of Reason; and have showed



showed you the intimate connection of this doctrine with the most acknowledged dictates of natural religion, to wit, That God is the Creator, the Preserver, the Governor, and the Judge of the world.—It is possible that some may ask, Why bestow so much time and labour in proving a point which nobody is disposed to deny?—Let this be my apology:—I cannot recollect the time when I seriously questioned the truth of this doctrine; but I can well remember a time, when it had no more influence upon my own soul, than if I had been sure it was false: And if your belief be of the same kind, as I fear with too many it is, be assured you have heard no more than was needful; nay, if an infinitely greater Teacher do not preach the subject over again to your hearts with power, your present belief shall only heighten your guilt; and the fewer your doubts are, the greater shall your condemnation be. If your hearts do not feel the constant presence of God, your verbal acknowledgements and speculative belief of it, shall only render your case something worse than

than the infidels. Satan can spare this tribute to God: so long as your faith dwells in the brain, or in the tongue, he doth not grudge you the possession of it; and if what you have been hearing sink no deeper, I shall readily admit, that you have heard too much. In that case, I have no doubt lost my labour, whether it hath been acceptable to you or not. But I shall not close the subject till I have pointed out the practical use we ought to make of it.

And, *1<sup>st</sup>*, Let us take occasion from this doctrine to admire, with humble gratitude the long-suffering patience and tender compassions of our God. Is he the immediate witness of all our sins? doth he see the rebellious thought rising in our minds, and doth he still look on, and spare, till it be fully formed and executed? How incomprehensible then must his patience be! We find it no easy matter to forgive our fellow-men, even when they are penitent; with what difficulty do we suppress our resentment, though the injury hath been committed at a great distance of time, and our offending brother himself

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was perhaps the first who informed us of it, by a free and sorrowful confession? What then can we think of the divine mercy and forbearance? It were much in God to forgive the transgressions of such creatures as we are, though he had not seen them done, and knew nothing about them, till he heard them from ourselves, in penitent confessions, and petitions for pardon: but to bear with us till lust had conceived and brought forth; to see the whole progress of the mind, its plots and contrivances, till the wicked deed be done; to behold the heart full of enmity, without one relenting thought; to spare a creature thus determined to affront him, when by one word he could disarm it of all its power, and render it completely miserable! it is this which sets the patience of God above all human, above all created understanding. O! my brethren, think of this.—Should an earthly prince behold one of his subjects, who lived within his palace, and was supported by his bounty, treasonably conspiring against him with his most inveterate enemies; should he, instead of treating him with  
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the severity he deserved, condescend to expostulate with him; and, in the most affectionate manner, intreat him to consult his own safety by returning to his duty, and not to wrest a punishment from him which he was unwilling to inflict; what do you think would be the state of the traitor's mind in such circumstances as these? how would it confound him to know, that his much injured sovereign had all along been privy to his baseness, but, like the most tender father, instead of punishing, had only pitied his folly?—We may partly conceive this, but are unable to express it.—The most artful description could give but a faint representation of the various feelings of an ingenuous heart, upon such an affecting occasion. And shall not the tender mercy of our God have the same influence upon us? He neither wants power to inflict, nor provocation to justify, the severest punishment our natures are capable of enduring.—What shall we say then?—He is God, and not man; and therefore it is that we are not consumed.—O let his patience, to  
which

which we are so infinitely indebted, work upon our ingenuity, that we may not unworthily burden it any more! and particularly let us watch over our hearts at this time, when the subject we are upon necessarily obliges us to set the Lord more immediately before us, as the witness and judge of our present temper and conduct; for surely his *eyes are in this place, beholding the evil and the good.*

2dly, This doctrine hath an obvious tendency to cherish simplicity and godly sincerity, and to banish all dissimulation and artifice from our hearts. He who realizeth the divine presence, will not dare to be an hypocrite: for he knows that his triumphing can be but short, and his joy only for a moment. Man he may deceive, who sees no farther than the outside; but he cannot deceive God, *whose eyes are in every place*; who “searcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins of the children of men.” And to what purpose should he labour for the applause of poor dying creatures, if he expose himself to the contempt and abhorrence of that infinite Being, upon whom  
he

he necessarily depends for life and breath, and all things? especially when he considers, that the mask he now wears shall ere long be pulled off, and his real character exposed to the view of an assembled world, in that day “when the hidden works of  
 “darkness shall be brought to light, and  
 “every one receive according to what he  
 “hath done, whether it be good or bad?” This motive to sincerity is plain, and obvious to the weakest understanding. Formality, or mere outward religiousness, must appear a vain unprofitable thing to the man who believes the doctrine of my text: for what can it avail him to be well thought of by a few during the short time of his abode on this earth, if at last he shall become the object of everlasting contempt; not to those few only, but to all that ever did or shall exist, till “the mighty angel,  
 “setting his right foot upon the sea, and his  
 “left foot on the earth, shall lift up his  
 “hand to heaven, and swear by him that  
 “liveth for ever and ever, That time shall  
 “be no more.”

*3dly,* This doctrine affords abundant  
 matter

matter of comfort and joy to the truly godly. Omniscience is the attribute of their Father and their friend; his eyes are continually upon them for good; he knows every thing that befalls them, and is perfectly acquainted both with their wants, and with those supplies which are proper and necessary for them. This qualifies him to be the object of their trust and confidence; upon him they may quietly and cheerfully rely, who is never far from any one of them, and “whose eyes run to and fro through-  
“ out the whole earth, to shew himself strong  
“ in behalf of those whose hearts are perfect  
“ towards him.”

But the omniscience of God is still more comfortable upon other accounts. What a stay and support did it prove to Peter, when our Lord said unto him the third time, (*John* xxi. 17.), “Simon, son of  
“ Jonas, lovest thou me?” Yes, Lord, said he, I love thee.—I confess indeed the baseness and treachery of my late conduct; yet still I do, and must protest, that I love thee.—It is true that I forsook thee, and impiously denied thee; and wert thou not, the

all-wise God, as well as my compassionate Saviour, this reiterated question would strike me dumb, and drive me from thy presence; for how could I pretend to love thee, or hope to be credited, after such baseness and perfidy? But this is my refuge: — “Thou, Lord, knowest all things.” — Thou canst look into my heart, and see thyself enthroned there; and therefore, notwithstanding the just cause I have given to all the world besides, to suspect the sincerity of my present profession, yet I humbly dare appeal to thy unlimited knowledge: “Thou, Lord, who knowest all things, knowest that I love thee.” This is still the support of upright souls. As perfection is not the attainment of our present state, the dearest of God’s children are too often carried away by the force of temptation; insomuch that, had they to do with a man like themselves, they might despair of being able to convince him that they loved him. But the sincere penitent, conscious of that affection which glows within his breast, can with tears make his appeal to God himself, and hope to be believed;

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because he to whom he appeals, needs no other proof or evidence to convince him, than his own immediate and unerring knowledge.

Once more, what hope and joy must spring up in the soul in its secret addresses to God, when it remembers that *his eyes are in every place!*—He to whom we pray, understandeth our very thoughts afar off. “Lord,” said the Psalmist, “all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee.”—A groan, a sigh, cannot escape his notice: nay, “he puts our tears into a bottle, and a book of remembrance is written before him, for them that think upon his name.”

Though words be a tribute due to God, yet he doth not need the information of language: “for when we know not what we should pray for as we ought, the Spirit itself helpeth our infirmities, making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will

“ of God,” *Rom.* viii. 26, 27. When the humble supplicant, like a diseased Lazarus, can do little more than lay himself down at the door of mercy, unable to pronounce one articulate word; when, like the publican in the parable, he can only smite upon his breast, to point at the place where the distemper lies; the Holy Spirit puts language into these actions, which God perfectly understands, and graciously accepts; because his *eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*

*4thly,* This doctrine is no less awful to the wicked than it is comfortable to the sincere and good. Where-ever they are, whatever they do, God sees and observes them. Men are frequently induced to commit sin by the hope of concealment: “ The  
 “ eye of the adulterer waiteth for the twi-  
 “ light; saying, No eye shall see me; and  
 “ disguiseth his face.” But this text discovers the folly of such hopes: the Judge himself beholds and knows them; for  
 “ there is no darkness nor shadow of death  
 “ where the workers of iniquity can hide  
 “ themselves from him.” O sinners, think

of

of this: None of your ways are hid from the Lord: He not only knows what you do, but he also knows what opposition and restraint you overcome in doing it. You may feign excuses to your neighbours, you may plead the violence of temptation, the want of recollection, or the strength of passion; and by these alleviations extenuate your guilt, and put some sort of colour upon your conduct: but God sees through all these thin disguises; he that heard every whispering of conscience within thee; and the complaints of this oppressed subdued deputy are all recorded against thee.—Brethren, this is a most alarming consideration: may God impress it upon our hearts, and give it that power and influence which it ought to have! This would humble us to purpose, and make us to loath ourselves in our own sight, because of our abominations.

Surely the heart of man is with good reason said to be “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” We are hastening to the tribunal of that Judge, whose eye hath been constantly upon us,

and from whose sentence there lies no appeal. No craft or policy can evade his justice, neither can any power deliver out of his hands: yet we live as if we had no witnesses, no judge, nor any cause of importance to be tried.—God hath assured us in his word, that “death is the wages of sin;” Reason condemns it; Conscience either remonstrates against it, or rebukes us for it:—yet, in defiance of all these, we hug it in our bosom, and refuse to let it go.

This is such perverse, such unaccountable folly, that were not the whole earth a bedlam, in which all have a tincture of the same disease, it would be regarded with equal surprize and horror. One of the most probable means for restoring men to their right senses, is the serious belief of this important doctrine, that *the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.* Which leads me to observe, in the

5th and last place, That an habitual impression of the divine presence would prove at once an effectual restraint from all man-

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ner of sin, and the most powerful incitement to every part of our duty.

This would deter us even from the most secret sins, and influence us as much in our closest retirement, as when we act in the public view of the world. Had we no other spectators than men, it might be sufficient to maintain a fair outside, because that only falls under their observation: but there is no covering so thick as to hide us from God; the most secret deviation of the heart is subject to his cognifance, as much as the most open transgression of the life; and sins committed in the deepest shades of darkness, are as perfectly known to him, as those committed in the clearest noon-day. None of the springs from whence they proceed can escape his notice, nor the temper of mind with which they are done; which give the truest light into their nature, and determine the precise degree of their malignity. What reason, then, have we to keep our hearts, as well as our lives, with all diligence, and to dread a sin in privacy, no less than when we know that many eyes are upon us?

With respect again to the practice of our duty, the influence of a realizing faith of the divine omniscience is so apparent, that it needs no illustration. "I have kept thy statutes and thy testimonies," said David; "for all my ways are before thee." Were God habitually present to our minds, we should think nothing too much to be done, or too hard to be endured, in his service. A holy ambition to approve ourselves to him, by whose final sentence we must stand or fall, would render us superior to every trial, and carry us forward in the way of his commandments with increasing vigour and alacrity: we should never "think that we had already attained, either were already perfect; but forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, we should press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Upon the whole, then, let us earnestly pray God, that he, by his grace, may strengthen our faith of this important truth, that *the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding*

*holding the evil and the good:* and enable us so to fet him before us during all the days of our pilgrimage on earth, that hereafter we may be admitted into his immediate presence; where, in the happy society of angels and faints, we shall enjoy the unclouded light of his countenance without interruption and without end. *Amen.*

S E R-

## S E R M O N III.

PSALM xix. 13.

*Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.*

**M**EMORABLE is that saying of the Apostle Paul, “ I had not known sin “ but by the law.” We can never judge aright of our temper and practice, till we prove them by this unerring rule. Many objects appear to have a strong resemblance while we view them apart, and at a distance from each other; which, in almost every feature, are found to disagree when they are brought together and examined with accuracy. Thus there is a seeming conformity to the divine law, an image of sanctity, which very often passeth for real holiness, and leads men “ to think of themselves more highly than they ought to “ think.”——Paul “ was alive without the “ law



“ law once ; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died.” So long as he knew only the letter of the law, and was a stranger to its spiritual meaning and just extent, he imagined that his prayers, his fastings, and his alms, accompanied with some pieces of bodily exercise, and an abstinence from the grosser acts of sin, were sufficient to recommend him to the friendship of God, and would certainly intitle him to the joys of immortality: but “ when the commandment came” in its native purity, and entered into his heart with light and power, he soon discovered his mistake, and was convinced, that his seeming virtues were no more in reality than “ dead works ;” his pharisaical righteousness a mere painted outside, the delusive picture or “ form of godliness.”

In like manner, the author of this Psalm, after a devout contemplation of the divine law (which he had magnified in the foregoing verses, by a just and animated detail of its amiable properties and salutary effects), turning his eyes inward, is struck with a sense of his own guilt and pollution:

“ Who,”

“ Who,” saith he, “ can understand his errors?”——Many indeed, too many, alas! I can soon recollect; for every period of my life hath been stained with sin: but besides all these, I now perceive, that in numberless instances, unobserved or forgotten, I must have deviated from so perfect a rule.—Upon this he supplicates the mercy of God, and implores the forgiveness of those “ errors” or infirmities, which had either escaped his notice, or dropped out of his remembrance: “ Cleanse thou me from secret faults:” “ secret,” not only with respect to others, but to myself also; hid from mine own eyes, as well as from the eyes of my fellow-men. And under this awful impression of the polluting nature even of his unobserved and “ secret faults,” he views with horror the more aggravated guilt of known and wilful sins; and prays with redoubled earnestness, in the words of my text, that it might please God to restrain or keep him back from these:—*Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.*

What these sins are,—and how much it concerneth us all to avoid them,—I shall endeavour

deavour to shew in the sequel of this discourse:—And as my text is a prayer, I shall conclude with some directions for the help of those who are willing to make it their own prayer, and wish to offer it up with acceptance and success.

By *presumptuous sins* we are to understand something different from those unavoidable failings, on account of which it is said, that “there is not a just man upon earth, who doeth good, and sinneth not.” Perfection in holiness is not the attainment of our present state: the best offend in many things; and “if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

There are some sins done through ignorance; and this circumstance, how great soever the offence may be in its own nature, doth certainly render the case of the offender more pitiable. We find “the Apostle and High-priest of our profession, Christ Jesus,” pleading this argument for mercy to his murderers: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” St  
“ Paul

“ Paul obtained mercy, who was before a  
 “ blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious,  
 “ because he did it ignorantly.” And the  
 Judge himself hath assured us, (*Luke* xii.  
 48.), that “ the servant who knew not his  
 “ lord’s will, and did commit things worthy  
 “ of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.”

There are other sins, into which men are hurried by sudden and violent temptation, which the Apostle, writing to the Galatians; calls “ being overtaken in a fault,” *Galat.* vi. 1. outwitted, as it were, and taken by surprise. In this case, he exhorts the brethren, “ to restore such an one in the spirit of  
 “ meekness :” and the argument he useth is very remarkable ; “ considering thyself, lest  
 “ thou also be tempted.” It farther deserves our notice, that the persons to whom the exhortation is addressed, are supposed to be “ spiritual ;” yet even to these he recommends compassion and tenderness, because the violence of the temptation might in like circumstances have overcome themselves. —“ Men do not despise a thief,” said the wise king of Israel, “ if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry.” In estimating

mating the different degrees of guilt, regard must always be had to the nature of the temptation : for according to the strength of that, the pride or perverseness of the sinner is proportionally diminished ; especially if it appear that he did not go forth to meet the temptation, but was really *overtaken* by it, in the proper sense of that word, and hurried along with its violence, before his mind could have freedom or leisure to reflect and reason upon the matter.

Having premised these distinctions, we shall now be able to discover, with greater ease and certainty, those peculiar ingredients which render sin presumptuous.

Knowledge is the first. This, as I have already hinted, must lie at the root of every presumptuous sin. — He is rather unfortunate than faulty, who, by mistake or accident, hurteth one in the dark ; but he who doth it in broad day, and with his eyes open, betrays malevolence, or wicked intention, which doth not admit of any extenuation. It was this that rendered the unbelieving Jews altogether inexcusable, according to that declaration of our Saviour,

*John*

*John* xv. 22. “ If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin ; but now they have no cloak for their sin.” Knowledge then being supposed as an essential ingredient,

The sin becomes more presumptuous when it is the fruit of deliberation and contrivance ; when the person ruminates and plots, and lays schemes for executing his criminal designs. Such a transgressor is described, *Prov.* vi. 14. “ Forwardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually ;” and again, *Psalms* xxxvi. 4. “ He deviseth mischief upon his bed ; he setteth himself in a way that is not good ; he abhorreth not evil.”

The presumption is farther heightened, when obstinacy is added to knowledge and deliberation ; when the transgressor “ holdeth fast his iniquity, and will not let it go,” but rusheth forward in his wicked course, “ even as the horse rusheth into the battle.” Such was the temper which the Jews expressed in their answer to Jeremiah, (*Jerem.* xliv. 16.) “ As for the word which thou hast spoken to us in the name of the  
“ Lord

“ Lord, we will not hearken unto thee, but  
“ will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth  
“ forth out of our own mouth.” And to  
this obstinacy the epithet of *presumptuous* is  
directly applied, *Deuteron. i. 43* where Mo-  
ses saith, “ I spake unto you, but ye would  
“ not hear, but rebelled against the com-  
“ mandment of the Lord, and went pre-  
“ sumptuously up into the hill.”

Again, if the warnings and reproofs of  
men be accompanied with the remonstran-  
ces of conscience, and enforced by the mo-  
tions of the Holy Spirit, these give a yet  
deeper tincture to the sinner's presumption,  
and render his obstinacy still more crimi-  
nal. With such guilt were the Jewish  
rulers directly charged by the first martyr  
Stephen, *Acts vii. 51*. “ Ye stiff-necked, and  
“ uncircumcised in heart and in ear, ye do  
“ always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fa-  
“ thers did, so do ye.”

But the sin becomes presumptuous in the  
highest degree, when, besides the remon-  
strances of conscience, and the strivings of  
the Holy Spirit, God, by some awful dis-  
pensations of his providence, “ hedgeth up

“ the finner’s way as with thorns,” and yet he will break through. Upon this account a distinguished brand of infamy is set upon Ahaz in the sacred history; of whom it is said, *2 Chron.* xxviii. 22. “ In the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord;” to which it is subjoined, with a peculiar emphasis, “ This is that King Ahaz,” that obstinate, that incorrigible offender, who stands on record as an awful beacon, for a warning to all succeeding generations.—These, I apprehend, are the principal ingredients which render sin presumptuous.

And from this description it will appear, that there are some sins which must always be presumptuous, and do not admit of any palliation.

*Profane swearing* is evidently of this kind. It hath no claim to pleasure, and as little to profit; the swearer seems to be wicked from pure malice, merely for the sake of being wicked. In vain do men plead provocation: for injure them who will, surely God doth them no injury; and if a fellow-creature offend them, that can  
never



never afford a reason for affronting their Creator, who is continually doing them good. Besides, it is only one instance of profane swearing for which even this alleviation can be pleaded: let the first act be supposed involuntary, the effect of some sudden disorder in the mind; what becomes of the next? that must necessarily be presumptuous; for the repetition of so unnatural a sin may easily be prevented, if the person hath a real abhorrence of it, and useth any efforts to guard against it. But, alas! how many are there who swear alike, whether they be angry or well pleased; who imprecate damnation upon themselves out of mere wantonness, and make such horrid oaths a principal part of their familiar conversation.—If any who hear me are guilty in this manner, let me prevail with them to pause for a little, till they have seriously considered what they are doing. It cost the Redeemer much to purchase salvation for you, not only prayers, but blood too; and dare you pray that your souls may have no share in it? This is the height of madness: Damna-

tion is easily obtained ; you need not pray for it ; if you apply not the remedy, you perish of course : but it is not so easy to be saved ; and must not these imprecations, which you have just cause to fear are recorded against you, increase the difficulty, and remove you farther from the road of mercy ? Think of this, O finners ! before it be too late, and speedily forsake this presumptuous sin.

*Perjury* is still more inexcusable, as it cannot even borrow the pretext of passion or surprize, but is a cool deliberate act of the most daring impiety. The person who swears in judgement has not only abundance of leisure to consider what he is about to say, but the very manner of administering an oath in all the courts I know, has something in it peculiarly solemn and awful, on purpose, no doubt, to stir up conscience to perform its office, and to oblige it to be faithful. Nay, the very words of an oath in judgement, express an immediate appeal to the Searcher of hearts in the tremendous character of final Judge ; and consequently imply, not only the per-  
son's

son's consent to accept damnation as the punishment of his falsehood, if he shall conceal or deny what he knows to be the truth, but even a formal and solemn adjuration of God to inflict damnation upon him; which is the highest degree of presumption that can possibly be imagined. —But though perjury be a *lie* with peculiar aggravations; yet there can be no *lies* of whatever kind, which are not presumptuous in one degree or other, inasmuch as they always require some exercise of invention to make them, and usually a great deal more to support their credit, and to keep them in countenance after they are made.

*Theft* must in every case be presumptuous: it is a work of time, which requires much thought and cunning to adjust the plan of operation, and no less address and conduct in carrying it into execution. Besides, the thief has many restraints to break through, not only the inward conviction of the wrong done to his neighbour, but the fears of a discovery likewise, and of that

disgrace and punishment with which it will certainly be attended.

The same may be said of “*whoremongers and adulterers, whom God will judge.*” For though such transgressors commonly plead the violence of temptation; yet, as I have already observed, this by itself cannot excuse from presumption, unless the temptation be so sudden and surprizing, that it gives the person no leisure to exercise his reason; which I am persuaded is seldom or never the case. These works of darkness are usually gone about with greater caution and secrecy than are consistent with mere passion; so that Reason hath been employed, though in a wrong way: and this is one of those ingredients that render sin presumptuous.

We may likewise say of *drunkenness*, that in most cases it is presumptuous. It is an excess which one can scarcely be surprized into, unless the liquor be mixed with some pernicious drug, or hath some peculiar quality with which he is utterly unacquainted. But this, I suppose, is a case that rarely happens. It usually takes some  
time

time before a person be intoxicated; and drunkenness comes on by such gradual advances, that one hath sufficient opportunity to observe its approach, and to make his escape, if he is not otherwise determined.

So that all these sins are evidently presumptuous; and as they are too commonly practised among us, I thought it my duty to mention them in particular, for the sake of those who know themselves to be guilty, that they may not waste their precious time in seeking after excuses to defend them against the heavy charge of presumption; but may, without a moment's delay, humble themselves in the presence of that God whom they have so grievously offended, imploring his pardoning mercy for what is past, and his powerful grace to restrain them for the future.

THE great importance of his restraint to us all, or how much it concerneth us to be kept back from every presumptuous sin, was the second thing I proposed to illustrate. And this will appear from two considerations.

1<sup>st</sup>, That such sins are most heinous in  
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their

their nature; and, *2dly*, most pernicious in their effects and consequences.

*1st*, They are most heinous in their nature. The language of the proud finner is, Who is Lord over me? He either disowns the authority of God, or bids him defiance, and provokes him to jealousy, as if he were stronger than he. Thus it is written, *Numbers* xv. 3. “The soul that doeth ought presumptuously, reproacheth the Lord:” reproacheth his knowledge, as if God was ignorant of his wickedness; or his justice and truth, as if he would not punish it; or his power, as if he could not. And what horrid impiety is this!——O finners, think of it: your known wilful sins cannot possibly be vindicated from this charge: all I have now said, and a great deal more, shall be made good against you at last, when God shall enter into judgement with your souls.——It is vain for you to plead, that you do not directly intend these things. I verily believe you think so; for, proud and stubborn as you are, I am confident that you dare not utter such blasphemies before God,  
nor

nor even avow them to your own hearts. But doth it follow from thence, that you are not chargeable with them? The fallacy of this reasoning can easily be detected.—Tell us, do you intend your own damnation?—I need not wait for an answer; I am sure you do not. Pray, then, what meaning have you at all?—You wilfully transgress the laws of God, but you do not intend to be punished for it; on the contrary, you shudder at the prospect of suffering, and would certainly oppose it with all your might. This is one side.—On the other hand, you say, that you have no direct intention to injure or insult the majesty of God; you mean no prejudice to his authority, nor to any of his perfections, his wisdom, holiness, justice, or almighty power.—Can any body reconcile these two opposites?—You are unwilling to be miserable; and yet you are willing that God should possess those tremendous attributes, by the exercise of which you must be made miserable. This is a flat contradiction.—The case is plain, whether you perceive it or not: you would certainly dethrone

dethrone God if you could; you would reverse his laws, or disarm his power, that you might follow your inclinations without fear or controul: And this is the disposition of every presumptuous sinner, though perhaps his heart may be so hard and unfeeling as not to perceive it. These remarks may suffice to show, of what a heinous nature presumptuous sins are.—I added, in the

*2d* place, That they are likewise most pernicious in their effects and consequences.

Every wilful sin hardens the heart, and renders it less penetrable than it was before: one conviction overcome, makes way for the conquest of another, and that of a third, and so on; the sinner by degrees waxeth stout against God, till at length every bond that should restrain him is broken asunder, and his heart becomes “fully set in him to do evil.” This is the natural effect of presumptuous sinning: conscience being often violated, grows callous and insensible, or, in the language of scripture, “scared as with a hot iron;” so that it not only  
 loseth



loseth its authority, but in great measure its feeling also, and suffers the sinner to rush forward in his wicked course without check or remorse.

But this is not all: These presumptuous sins have not only a hardening influence upon the heart, but they likewise provoke God to inflict a judicial hardness upon it, which of all his judgements is by far the most terrible; for this, as it were, seals up the sinner to final condemnation, and renders his recovery not only difficult, but utterly impossible. “Ephraim is joined to his idols,” saith God; “let him alone:” he is obstinately bent upon idolatry, give him no disturbance. By this awful sentence God lays an inhibition, if I may so speak, upon every thing that might either restrain or reclaim the offender; he withdraws his despised grace, and suffers him to wallow in that filthiness he hath chosen, till the fire that is not quenched shall awaken him to a fruitless despairing conviction of his folly.

But as this judgement is, in a peculiar manner, “God’s strange work,” to which  
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he never proceeds till all reclaiming methods have been tried and baffled, let us suppose, if you please, that the sinner begins to awaken out of his lethargy; yet how dismal must the effects of his presumptuous sins be, even in this case? Oh! what horror will the remembrance of them raise in his mind? How will they discourage him in his addresses for mercy, to that God whom he hath so impudently affronted and defied to his face? How will they damp his expectations of pardon, when God sets them all in battle-array before him, and conscience takes hold of that dreadful sentence against the presumptuous transgressor, (*Numbers xv. 31.*) “ Because he hath despised  
 “ the word of the Lord, and hath broken  
 “ his commandment; that soul shall be utterly cut off: his iniquity shall be upon  
 “ him?” If so good a man as Heman was obliged to cry out, “ While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted;” what must be the condition of the newly awakened presumptuous sinner?

Nay, let us suppose, that God hath spoken peace to his soul, and given him reason

son to hope that his iniquities are forgiven; yet these sins of presumption always leave behind them the scars of those gashes which they made upon the heart: and as deep bodily wounds, even after they have been closed, are apt to ache upon a change of weather; so any variation in the person's lot that is capable of being construed into a token of God's anger, will recall to his memory those pardoned iniquities, and make them a fresh occasion of grief and anguish to his doubting perplexed soul.

Besides, though pardon secures against final condemnation, yet sins of this kind are seldom remitted without some visible testimony of God's displeasure. What calamities befel the author of this Psalm, even after the Prophet had intimated to him, that "the Lord had put away his sin?" His daughter ravished;—the incestuous brother slain;—Absalom invades both his throne and his bed;—the bulk of his subjects desert him;—and he himself, accompanied with a few remaining friends, is driven into the wilderness, and hard put

to

to it to shift for his life. And though David was chargeable with many failings, and some of them gross enough, yet in the character which the inspired historian hath given of him, they are all passed over in silence, except his complicated guilt in the matter of Uriah: but that is expressly mentioned, and left as a blot upon the name of this great and good man, to deter others from such deliberate and presumptuous sins; for thus it is written, (1 Kings xv. 5.) “ David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, *save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.*”—Nay, David with his own hand hath recorded his guilt in the 51st Psalm, where to this day he professes his shame and sorrow, and will continue to do so as long as God shall have a church upon earth.—When these things are attended to, the importance of being kept back from presumptuous sins must appear to us in the strongest and most affecting light.

Let me now address those whose consciences

sciences bear witness, that they have often transgressed in this manner, and are living perhaps at this very time in the habitual indulgence of some presumptuous sin. Have you seriously considered the danger you are exposed to? David's case, which I just now mentioned, suggests to me one argument that may possibly have weight with you. Some of you, perhaps, are sly offenders; so cunning in your way, that the world hath not found you out. But, say, would it not give you pain to think, that one day you should be discovered? ——— Now, what assurance have you that this shall never happen? David, I suppose, conducted his criminal pursuit with as much address and secrecy as you can do; and after it had lain buried for the space of nine months, I am persuaded he was as fearless of a discovery as you presently are: yet God detected him in an extraordinary manner, and not only made his sin visible in his punishment, but even obliged him, as you have heard, by a solemn exercise of repentance, which is left upon record for the use of the church, to  
publish

publish his confession of it to all succeeding generations. — Have you no apprehension that something of a similar kind may befall yourselves? Cannot God disclose your secret sins if he pleaseth? And have you not cause to fear that he will do it, from what he said to David: “Thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun?” — Will God show greater tenderness to your reputation than to that of the man according to his own heart? May he not, in his righteous displeasure, permit that lust, which you presumptuously cherish in your bosom, to grow so strong, that all your cunning shall not be able to keep it within bounds? and then it will fly abroad, and become public of course. — I beg you may attend to this: I confess it is a motive of the lowest kind; but low as it is, you ought at least to take its aid, till you get a relish for others of a more ingenuous and spiritual nature.

Consider, farther, what inward torment you must one day feel: at present, perhaps, conscience is asleep; but it shall not  
always

always sleep; affliction may awaken it; the approach of death most probably will; and then “shall your fear come as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind: distress and anguish shall then come upon you;” for in that awful season, “the Lord shall give thee a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind. And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life. In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even; and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning, for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.”

—Or if this seem not misery enough, look forward a little farther to the tremendous issue: “Who can dwell with devouring flames? who can lie down in everlasting burnings?” Yet this, O sinners, must be your portion, if you live and die in rebellion against God. The sweetness of sin passeth quickly away, but the sting of it is perpetual: the gnawing worm shall never

die, the fire of God's wrath shall never be extinguished.

It is really astonishing, that creatures endowed with reason, and capable of exercising reflection and foresight, should, in such a situation, enjoy any sort of peace for a moment. What is it that supports you?—Do you imagine that God will overlook your rebellion, and never call you to an account for your conduct? Hear his own words by the mouth of his Prophets: “ I  
 “ will search Jerusalem with candles, and  
 “ punish the men that are settled on their  
 “ lees; that say in their heart, The Lord  
 “ will not do good, neither will he do  
 “ evil.” *Zephaniab* i. 12.——And again,  
 “ Wo unto them that draw iniquity with  
 “ cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a  
 “ cart-rope: that say, Let him make speed,  
 “ and hasten his work, that we may see  
 “ it; and let the counsel of the holy One  
 “ of Israel draw nigh and come, that we  
 “ may know it.” *Isaiab* v. 18. Has he not already, in the course of his providence, given sufficient evidence of his hatred of sin; and by many awful tokens of his  
 his



his righteous displeasure, extorted a confession from the most obstinate finners, “that verily there is a God that judgeth  
“in the earth?” — But you have a proof of this in your own bosom. — What means the voice of conscience within you? Whence that fear and horror which sometimes seize upon you? Surely these painful feelings are involuntary; for no man chooseth to be his own tormentor. — Well, then, this internal sense is in place of a thousand witnesses, to prove, that God is marking your steps in the mean time, and that ere long he will punish you for all your iniquities; “for according to this fear, so is  
“the wrath of God,” which is the object of it.

Do you presume upon the mercy of God? Listen to that awful declaration in the book of Deuteronomy, chap. xxix. 19, 20. “If  
“it come to pass, when he heareth the  
“words of this curse, that he bless himself  
“in his heart, and say, I shall have peace,  
“though I walk in the imagination of my  
“heart: the Lord will not spare him, but  
“the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy,  
G 2 “shall

“ shall smother against that man, and all the  
“ curses that are written in the book of the  
“ law shall be upon him.”—True, God is  
merciful; but is it not equally true, that he  
is holy and righteous? Can you devise a  
more lofty description of the divine good-  
ness, than that which was published by  
God himself, when, descending in a cloud  
upon mount Sinai, he passed by before Mo-  
ses, and proclaimed his name, “ the Lord,  
“ the Lord God, merciful and gracious,  
“ long - suffering, and abundant in good-  
“ ness and truth, keeping mercy for thou-  
“ sands, forgiving iniquity, and transgres-  
“ sion, and sin;” (but observe what fol-  
lows), “ and that will by no means clear  
“ the guilty?” *Exod.* xxxiv. 6. 7. Nay, the  
most amazing instance of divine love, to  
wit, God’s sending his Son into the world  
to die for sinners, is, at the same time, the  
most awful proof of his inflexible justice,  
and of his irreconcilable hatred of sin;  
seeing no less a sacrifice could expiate the  
guilt of it than the blood of him by whom  
all things were made. Neither shall this  
costly sacrifice avail us, if we still continue  
to

to hold fast our iniquities : for “ the Son  
“ of God was manifested for this very pur-  
“ pose, that he might destroy the works of  
“ the devil.” And in vain do we plead the  
merit of his death, unless we follow the ex-  
ample of his life, and submit to the govern-  
ment of his laws and Spirit ; for “ he is the  
“ author of eternal salvation only to them  
“ that obey him.”

But it may be, you hope to make all up  
by repentance ; and though at present there  
are some sins you are unwilling to part  
with, yet you propose to do it afterwards,  
with a resolution never to return any more  
to folly. Well, sinners, this at least is a  
plain confession that you are self-condemned  
creatures in the mean time. You admit  
that repentance is necessary, and that  
you are undone without it.——And now  
let me display to you the folly of your  
conduct.——Should you die this night,  
what would become of you ? and what as-  
surance have you that you shall be alive  
to-morrow ? Were not Zimri and Cosbi cut  
off in the act of sin ? and have not many  
others been carried off by a sudden death,

without leisure afforded them to cry for mercy? Your sin, and consequently your misery, is present and certain: your repentance only future, and therefore altogether uncertain; for who knoweth what a day may bring forth?——Besides, is it not egregious folly to do that deliberately which needeth repentance? Would he not be justly accounted mad, who should drink a deadly poison, merely to try the strength of an antidote?——Though you could repent at pleasure, and had a lease of life to any term of your own choosing, which you well know you have not; yet, even upon this supposition, your conduct would be foolish and irrational. But I have something to add that is still more alarming. Repentance is the gift of God; it is a grace that can only be produced in your hearts by that divine Spirit, whom now you grieve: And is grieving him the way to obtain his assistance? must God wait your time, and patiently endure all your affronts, and then bestow upon you a pure favour, to which you can plead no title, whenever you shall deign to ask it? No, sinners.

sinners.——There are such awful words in your Bibles as these: “ My Spirit shall not always strive with man;” and, “ Because when I called, ye refused; when I stretched out my hand, ye did not regard me; therefore will I laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.” Go, think upon these, and get you to your knees, and beg of God, for Christ’s sake, that he may pardon what is past, and restrain you from such presumptuous sins for the future. This brings me to the

LAST thing I proposed; which was, to direct you how to put up this prayer to God, *Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.*

In the 1<sup>st</sup> place, You must do it sincerely, with an unfeigned and earnest desire, that God may hear and grant your request. We are very apt to impose upon ourselves in this matter. Conscience being galled and irritated by presumptuous sins, may grow so turbulent and clamorous, that something must be done to still and pacify

it. By this means, we may be forced into the closet, and obliged to use the words of my text; nay, to apply them to those particular sins for which conscience upbraideth us. But, alas! our prayers are oft-times false and hypocritical; we hate not the sin, but the remorse that follows it; and we wish not so much to be delivered from the sin, as from the fierce challenges of the awful reprovcr within us.—Have you not discovered something of this hypocrisy in the time of praying? Have you not felt a secret love to the sin you professed to renounce; nay, some degrees of fear lest God should take you at your word, and render that sin bitter and unpleasant to you? Need I tell you, that such prayers are an abomination to the Lord, and instead of diminishing, aggravate your guilt? To pray, is not to offer up words, but desires, to God: I therefore said, that in using this petition, you must do it with a sincere and earnest desire, that God may hear and grant your request. It was for this purpose I set before you the heinous nature and fatal effects of presumptuous sins, that

that you might view them as deadly foes, and long to be rescued from their tyranny; for till your hearts are brought to this, in vain do you utter the words of David; your prayers are hollow and insincere, whatever dress you put them into; and are themselves more presumptuous than any of those sins against which you pretend to use them.

*2dly*, We must put up this request, from a humble sense of our own weakness, with a lively hope of the mercy of God, and a stedfast reliance upon the efficacy of his grace. These qualifications are absolutely necessary: for till we feel our inability to overcome our impetuous and headstrong passions, we shall not be very importunate with God to restrain them; and we shall soon grow weary in our addresses to him for aid, if we either call in question his good-will to bestow it, or doubt of its sufficiency to answer our necessities. We must neither pray proudly nor despairingly; we affront God equally both ways. If we go to him merely in a complimentary way, as if we did him honour by asking  
some

some slender assistance only to render the conquest more easy; this may provoke him to leave us in the hands of our enemies, till, by some fatal overthrow, we are brought to a thorough conviction of our impotence; for “ he resisteth the proud, and  
“ giveth grace only to the humble: the  
“ hungry are filled with good things, but  
“ the rich are sent empty away.”

On the other hand, should we either question his willingness or ability to help us, would not this be to cast upon him vile dishonour, after all the illustrious proofs he hath given us, both of his love and saving power? “ He that spared not his own  
“ Son, but delivered him up for us all;  
“ how shall he not with him also freely give  
“ us all things?”

Let us therefore, under a deep sense of our depravity and weakness, humbly and importunately cry to God, that he may deliver us from the oppression of our tyrannical lusts; and these cries of the oppressed shall “ enter into the ears of the  
“ Lord of Sabaoth.”—At the same time, let us harbour no dishonourable suspicions  
either



either of his mercy, or of his power:—  
“ We have a great High-priest, who is pas-  
“ fed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of  
“ God, who now appears in the presence  
“ of God for us. Having therefore bold-  
“ nefs to enter into the holiest by the blood  
“ of Jesus, by a new and living way, which  
“ he hath consecrated for us through the  
“ veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having  
“ a High-priest who is touched with the feel-  
“ ing of our infirmities, and was in all  
“ points tempted like as we are; let us come  
“ boldly to the throne of grace, that we  
“ may obtain mercy, and find grace to help  
“ in time of need.”

If we thus ask, we shall certainly receive: The great Captain of our salvation, whose grace is sufficient for all his people, will not only keep us back from presumptuous sins, but in due time he will bruise Satan underneath our feet, and “ grant unto us  
“ to sit with him in his throne, even as he  
“ also overcame, and is set down with the  
“ Father in his throne.” — Let me only add, in the

*Third and last* place, That our prayers to  
God

God for restraining grace, must be accompanied with our own most vigorous efforts to resist all temptations to presumptuous sins, otherwise they shall not be accepted.

God will so do his work, as that we shall do ours likewise; for "God's working in us to will and do," instead of superseding the necessity of our own endeavours, is urged in scripture as a motive and encouragement, to make us "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." Prayer is not only an acknowledgement of our dependence upon God for the things we ask, but it likewise imports a resolution on our part, to use all proper means for obtaining them; and the vigour of our endeavours is the best proof of our sincerity. Should a person who is just now praying, "Lead me not into temptation," rise immediately from his knees, and go forth to invite, or even to meet a temptation, who could believe that such a man was in earnest? Let us be doing, and then we may, with greater confidence, both ask the divine aid, and hope to obtain it. If, in a humble dependence upon God, we faithfully

fully employ the strength we have, more shall be added to us as our necessities require : “ For to him that hath shall be given. — They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. — Wait therefore on the Lord : be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart : wait, I say, on the Lord.” *Amen.*

## S E R M O N IV.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 5.

*Having a form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof.*

“**T**HE sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight.” It is the heart of the worshipper which God principally regards; if that be wrong, external homage is only “vain oblation,” which can never ascend to his throne with acceptance. Happy were it for us, had we a just impression of this interesting truth; but many, alas! are too apt to impose upon themselves. Instead of aspiring to that inward purity which is necessary to qualify them for communion with God, they seem to have no higher aim, than to lull conscience asleep by the practice of some cheap

cheap and common duties, lest its galling reproofs should alarm their fears, and anticipate the horrors of approaching judgement. Thus they dream of safety, when destruction is fast coming upon them; and, with “ untempered mortar,” rear up for themselves “ a refuge of lies,” which, ere long, shall be tumbled down, and bury them in its ruins.—For awakening such persons from their fatal security, I have chosen this passage of Holy Scripture, wherein the Apostle gives us a part of the character of deceiving hypocrites, or rather, indeed, a comprehensive description of them in few words: *They have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.* Their religion is a mere carcass, a body without the soul, a lifeless picture or image of godliness: they assume the garb and air of sanctity, but are strangers, nay, enemies, to the thing itself.—That the following discourse may be “ profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness,” I shall, in the

*First* place, Endeavour to open the nature  
of

of true *godliness*, and to show wherein the life and *power* of it consist.

*Secondly*, I shall enquire, whence it is, that any who *deny the power of godliness* should submit to the drudgery of practising the *forms* of it?—and then point out the improvement which both saints and sinners ought to make of this subject.

GODLINESS, in general, is the subjection or devotedness of the soul to God himself. It is the practical acknowledgement of his unlimited sovereignty, and the unreserved dedication of the whole man to his service; or, to speak in the emphatical language of this Apostle, it is “Christ formed” in the heart, by the powerful energy of the Holy Spirit: in consequence whereof, the person becomes “a new creature,” both with regard to his temper and practice; “he partakes of the divine nature;” and “those members” which were formerly the “servants of sin,” are now employed as “instruments of righteousness unto God.”

It is not a cold assent to the truths of religion; it is not a natural softness and benevolence

volence of temper; it is not the abstaining from gross sins, or the giving to God a corner of our hearts, and some vacant portions of our time, while the bulk of both is alienated from him,—that will intitle us to the character of godly men.—As he *only* is God, who is universal Lord, supreme in wisdom, in power, and in goodness; so that *only* is godliness which reveres and honours God, in a way suited to that high and incommunicable character.—Genuine piety expresseth itself thus: “Whom have I  
 “in heaven but thee, O Lord? there is  
 “none upon earth that I desire besides thee.” We are not *godly*, whatever we profess or seem, if, in our most deliberate and affectionate choice, we do not prefer the one true God, and the enjoyment of his favour, to all that can be found throughout the wide extent of his works; if we make not his will the measure of ours, his law the sovereign guide of our conduct, and his glory the ultimate end of our obedience. But more particularly, in the

*First* place, *Godliness* includes a supreme love to God himself, and a constant prevail-

ing desire to please him, mixed with a holy reverential awe, or fear of offending him. I have joined these together, because they appear to be of equal necessity and use, to constitute that frame and temper of mind wherein the essence of piety or true *godliness* doth consist.—Fear is necessary to keep God in our eye: it is the office of love to enthrone him in our heart.—Fear cautiously avoids whatever may offend: love yields a prompt and liberal service.—Fear regards God as a witness and judge: love cleaves to him as a friend, nay a father.—Fear maketh us watchful and circumspect: love renders us active and resolute.—In short, they go hand in hand, and mutually assist each other: Love keeps fear from being servile and distrustful; and fear keeps love from being forward and secure: and both spring from one root, namely, Faith in God, as a being possessed of infinite perfection, and related to us as our Creator and Governor, our Redeemer, and our Judge.

This distinguisheth true *godliness* from every counterfeit, or false appearance of it.—The seeming religiousness of the *formalist*,



*malist*, is either assumed to impose upon the world, without any regard to God at all, or else it flows entirely from a tormenting fear of future wrath: in his heart there is an aversion from God and his service, at the very time he is professing to honour him with his body; reluctant, and hesitating at every step, he proceeds no farther in the road of duty, than he thinks may suffice to escape damnation: he doth more than he would do, were he not forced by necessity; and if left to his own choice, he would rather live at large like the beasts that perish, and render no homage to God at all.

*Secondly*, The power of godliness consists in the conquest of our corrupt and rebellious passions. These indeed still live and fight within us; and will continue to do so, in one degree or other, till death pull down these earthly tabernacles: but if we are truly sanctified, their strength shall gradually languish and decay: victory is sown in that new nature we have got; for “whatsoever is born of God overcometh  
“the world:—Jesus our Lord shall ere

“ long deliver us from the body of this  
 “ death, and the God of peace shall in due  
 “ time bruise Satan underneath our feet.”

——Whereas the formalist is altogether carnal; corruption prevails against reason and conscience; the flesh gives law; and every faculty of the mind, every member of the body, is a willing slave to its usurped authority.—Perhaps he has cunning enough “ to wash the outside;” to refrain from those sins which would stain his reputation, and render him contemptible in the opinion of the world: But all the while he feels no hatred of sin in his heart; his conformity to the law doth not flow from an inward principle of holiness, but is purely an artificial thing, calculated to please others; and he cares for no more of it than is absolutely necessary for attaining that end.

*Thirdly*, The power of godliness ennobles the soul with a holy indifference to all earthly things. The godly man is one whose treasure is in heaven: he hath seen through the deceit and vanity of this world, and therefore esteems it but dross  
 and

and dung in comparifon of God, and things eternal: he is haftening to the promifed land of reft, and will not eagerly contend for an inheritance in this wildernefs, nor be greatly dejected when it is either with-held or taken from him. Faith hath fo far annihilated this world, that it is become as nothing in his eye, and hath no bribe to offer, that is fufficient to feduce him from the fervice of his God, or the care of his precious and immortal foul. This holy indifference to earthly things, this divine elevation of fentiment and affection, is an eminent part of the godly man's character, and one of the moft ftriking effects of the power of religion in his heart.——The *formalift* may, no doubt, put on the appearance of this, he, too, may talk of his contempt of the world: but when a trying time comes, his hypocrify and earthly-mindednefs will foon difcover themfelves: “ Demas hath forfaken me, (faid Paul), having loved this prefent world.” Affliction, and efpecially perfecution for the fake of Chrift, makes a wide and vifible diftinction betwixt the

truth of grace, and all the counterfeits of it. This is a test which the formalist cannot stand: the predominant interest must then appear, and can no longer be concealed. In that day, all mere speculations about religion vanish; nor can any thing support the sufferer but what he firmly believes and feels in his heart. The unfound professor may look big for a while, and part with many lesser things: but when matters are brought to this crisis, "Sell all that thou hast, and take up the cross;" renounce every present sensible enjoyment for the sake of distant invisible blessings; then he must throw aside the mask, and confess that the world is supreme in his heart, and that heaven was never valued by him but as a secondary good, which he wished to have in reversion, when he could keep his hold of this earth no longer.

*Fourthly,* The soul that is under the power of godliness hath a vehement thirst after the enjoyment of God himself. It is God in Christ whom the godly man seeketh in the ordinances of religion; either to know more of his will, or to have nearer

communion with him, or to receive from him fresh supplies of grace, for cleansing and quickening and comforting his soul. These are to him like the tree into which Zaccheus climbed up that he might see Jesus: and he useth them only for that end. Doth he go to the sanctuary? it is, “that he may behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple.” Doth he approach the altar? it is, that he may meet with “God his exceeding joy.” “As the hart panteth for the brooks of water, so pants his thirsty longing soul for God, even the living God;” and he always prefers “the light of his countenance” to the greatest increase “of corn and of wine,” or whatever else this earth can afford.—

Now the formalist is an utter stranger to these exercises of the heart: he feels no anxiety after communion with God: he prays, but never troubles himself with inquiring if his prayer is accepted: he goes to church, not that he may wait upon God, or receive spiritual nourishment from the word preached; but merely to gratify his curiosity, and to get some addition to his

stock of notional religion: he grows weary of the necessary bread of life: he loaths that dry manna, and reckons every Sabbath and sermon lost, in which he is not amused with variety and change. In short, he looks upon the duties of religious worship merely as a task imposed upon him by an arbitrary master, who is too strong for him to contend with; and therefore he performs them for his own safety, and is always glad when they are over, and thinks that God hath nothing more to require at his hand.

Once more, in the *fifth* place, The power of godliness is manifested by a stedfast course of holy living, by an uniform and unreserved obedience to all God's commandments. I observed, in the entrance, that godliness is the subjection or devotedness of the soul to God himself: and in vain do we pretend to this, if we object against any of his laws; for the Apostle James hath assured us, that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."—"It is not the calling Christ Lord, Lord, but the doing the things which he says," that proveth

proveth us to be Christians indeed : “ Yea,  
“ in this the children of God are manifest,  
“ and the children of the devil. He that  
“ doeth not righteoufness, is not of God.”

—The formalist, as I have already admitted, may go a considerable length in an outward reformation of manners; he may abstain from pollutions of the grosser kind, and even do many things that are materially good : but still he hath his exceptions : some sins are so dear to him, that he will by no means consent to part with them ; and some duties are so displeasing to the flesh, that he cannot be reconciled to them at any rate : he therefore endeavours, either to suit his opinion to his inclination, by persuading himself that they are no duties ; or, if the evidence of their authority is too strong to be evaded, he may attempt to do something like them in a cold and superficial manner ; but the things themselves he will not do.—Whereas the godly man  
“ esteems all God’s commandments con-  
“ cerning all things to be right, and hates,  
“ with a perfect hatred, every false and  
“ wicked way.” This is the habitual lan-  
guage

guage of his soul: " O that my ways were  
 " directed to keep thy statutes! — Show  
 " me thy way, O Lord, teach me thy path,  
 " lead me in thy truth, and teach me; for  
 " thou art the God of my salvation; on thee  
 " do I wait all the day.—What I know  
 " not, teach thou me: If I have done ini-  
 " quity, I will do so no more.— Let the  
 " words of my mouth, and the meditations  
 " of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight,  
 " O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer."  
 —" His delight is in the law of his God ;"  
 and instead of complaining, that the duties  
 required of him are many or burthenfome,  
 he rather rejoices, that he is furnished with  
 such a variety of means and occasions of  
 testifying his gratitude to that amiable Sove-  
 reign, to whom he hath devoted himself,  
 and his all: Love makes the Redeemer's yoke  
 to feel easy, and his burden light; and no-  
 thing grieves him so much, as that he can-  
 not do all that he would, in acknowledge-  
 ment of those manifold inestimable favours  
 he hath already received, or hopes to en-  
 joy.

Such is the *godly man*; and after this man-

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ner doth *godliness* exert its *power*, “ casting  
“ down imaginations, and every high thing  
“ that exalteth itself against the knowledge  
“ of God, and bringing every thought,”  
word, and action, into full “ captivity to  
“ the obedience of Christ.”

Here then, let me intreat you, in the serious review of what hath been delivered upon this branch of the subject, to make a fair and impartial trial of yourselves. God, who knoweth all things, is already acquainted with you: each of you must very soon be acquainted with himself, and all the world shall know you too: death is at hand to open your own eyes, and the last judgement shall publish your real character, and expose it to the view of angels and men; so that, upon all accounts, it is necessary that you be early and thoroughly assured of your condition. If, when weighed in the balance, you are found wanting, you shall have this advantage by the discovery, that it will rouse you from that lethargy, out of which the unquenchable fire would at length awaken you; and powerfully incite you to do something for your safety, ere it be too late:

“ God’s

“ God’s arm is not shortened that it cannot  
“ save, neither is his ear heavy that it cannot hear.” The Lord Jesus is still as  
“ mighty as ever, to save to the uttermost  
“ all who come unto God by him;” and there is nothing that puts you so far out of the road of his mercy, as self-deceit and presumption do. Let your case be ever so bad; yet, if you are truly sensible of it, and apply to him for relief, you shall find him, at all times, ready with open arms to receive you: nay, he invites you to come to him in the mildest terms of condescension and grace; “ Come unto me, all ye that labour  
“ and are heavy laden, and I will give you  
“ rest.” So that the most compassionate and friendly office that a minister of the gospel can perform, is to call upon sinners loudly and repeatedly, “ to examine and  
“ prove their ownelves,” that from an alarming sense of danger, they may be compelled, by a happy necessity, to flee for refuge to that Almighty Saviour, who alone can deliver them from the wrath to come. This indeed is the principal aim of my discourse; I have furnished you with several characters  
of

of true godliness, by the help of which you may discover whether you are possessed of it or not.—These I now leave with you, that every man's conscience may apply them to himself in particular, and pronounce sentence according to the evidence it may find; —and shall proceed to enquire, very briefly, in the

*Second* place, Whence it is, that any who deny the power of godliness, should submit to the drudgery of maintaining the form of it?

With respect to many, it may be said, that they appear in the form of godliness by mere accident; because it happens to be in repute among those with whom they converse. They go to church, purely because others do it; they observe an outward decorum of manners, to avoid singularity, and walk the customary round of duties from a natural timidity, or perhaps civility, of temper, which will not suffer them to do any thing that may be shocking or offensive to their friends or neighbours. Of this sort, numbers are to be found in every  
Christian

Christian society: they want boldness, or perhaps invention, to become originals, by striking out a new path for themselves; and therefore they go along with the multitude, comply with the prevailing custom, and have no other rule of life but this short convenient one, to be always in fashion, and to do what others are doing around them.

Ambition may be considered as another source of formality. Men have sagacity enough to discover that reputation is power; and that the more a person is esteemed, the greater authority and influence he will have: and therefore, when religion is in credit, the greatest enemies to the power of godliness often betake themselves to its outward form, which they employ as a ladder for helping them to climb into a higher place, where, with greater ease, they may possess the means of gratifying their pride, and lust of domination.

It sometimes happens too, that covetousness, or the love of money, hath no inconsiderable hand in making men assume

fume the form of godlinefs. This was the juft reproach of the Pharifees, thofe noted formalifts in the Jewish church: They fafted often, they prayed long, they abounded in wafhings, and in many bodily austerities: but our Saviour hath affured us, that they did all “to be feen of men.” They were mere pretenders to devotion; *they lived by that craft*, and ufed the forms of religion merely as an engine for drawing the eftates of widows and orphans into their own hands, that, under the truft of managing them for their behoof, they might the more fe curely and fuccefsfully enrich themfelves at their coft.

The two laft are defigning formalifts, who know, or at leaft who may know, that they are hypocrites; ftangers, nay, enemies to the power of that godlinefs which they outwardly profefs to eftem and honour.

But there are others who praftife the forms of religion to quiet and pacify a natural confcience; and do fo many things, that, in appearance at leaft, *they are not*  
*far*

*far from the kingdom of God*: but still they resist the Spirit of grace, and will not submit to the *power of godliness*. Reason teacheth them, that as their being is derived from God, so their well-being must wholly depend upon his favour; and revelation proclaims, in the strongest terms, that *without holiness no man shall see God*. Hence they see, that a grossly wicked and profligate course of life, would at once cut them off from all hope of happiness; and as they cannot bear the thoughts of being eternally miserable, therefore something must be done, in the mean time, to keep the garrison in peace. Were they presently to conclude themselves in a state of condemnation, their sensual enjoyments would immediately lose their relish, and the prospect of future approaching vengeance would embitter and poison every comfort they possess. To remedy this, they advance a few steps in the ways of godliness, and frame a religion for themselves, composed of as much truth and duty as may consist with their worldly prosperity and pleasures; which, while it leaves them sufficient

ent room to profecute their carnal aims, doth at the fame time ferve for a fheath to confcience, to keep it from wounding them when they are bufied in the brutifh fervice of their lufts. Prefent eafe is what they chiefly covet ; and they choofe no more of religion than ferves that purpofe.

Thus have I endeavoured to fhew, whence it is, that men who deny the power of godlinefs fubmit to the drudgery of maintaining the form thereof. Some do it to impofe upon the world, that they may gratify their ambitious or covetous defires ; and others do it to impofe upon themfelves, that they may not be “ tormented before the “ time.”

And now, let me addrefs my difcourfe to thofe who, from what they have heard, are in fome meafure convinced that they are the perfons defcribed in this paffage. —“ How long, O ye fons of men, will “ ye love vanity?—How long will ye “ fpend your money for that which is not “ bread, and your labour for that which “ cannot profit you?” How long will you court the deceiving fhadow of godlinefs,

and fly from the substance, which would certainly enrich and save you? The prodigal's punishment is your choice; you feed upon husks, when there is bread enough in your Father's house, and to spare: you take all the trouble of appearing religious, and taste none of the comforts that religion affords; you endure all the fatigue of acting a constrained artificial part before men, when, by yielding to the power of godliness, you might, with less labour, and infinite delight, become the very persons you feign yourselves to be. When you reject the truth and reality of *godliness*, how can you painfully adhere to the *form* of it? Or, when you go the length of being very punctual in the externals of religion, why do you not go a little farther, and study to be really and inwardly what you outwardly profess, and would seem to be?

Is it the praise of men that you covet? This at best is but an empty fading thing; neither can you be sure of attaining it. At any rate, the foundation of it shall be taken away at the final judgement, when every disguise shall be stripped off, and the hidden works



works of darknefs shall be brought to light. Nay, God may detect your bafe hypocrify even before you leave this world ; fo that, as it is written, *Job* xxvii. 23. “ Men fhall clap  
“ their hands at you, and his you out of  
“ your place.”——Is it riches you feek by your feeming religioufnefs? In this likewise you may be difappointed, according to that other threatening denounced againft the hypocrite, *Job* xxvii. 16. “ Though he heap  
“ up filver as the duft, and prepare raiment  
“ as the clay ; he may prepare it, but the  
“ juft fhall put it on, and the innocent fhall  
“ divide the filver.” Befides, “ Riches pro-  
“ fit not in the day of God’s wrath :” And, after all, “ What is the hope of the hypo-  
“ crite though he hath gained, when the  
“ Lord taketh away his foul?”——“ Can the  
“ rufh grow up without mire? can the flag  
“ grow without water? While it is yet in  
“ its greennefs, and not cut down, it wither-  
“ eth before any other herb. So are the  
“ paths of all that forget God, and the hy-  
“ pocrite’s hope fhall perifh: whose hope  
“ fhall be cut off, and whose trust fhall be  
“ a fpider’s web. He fhall lean upon his  
I 2 “ houfe,

“house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure:” And, Oh! how vain is that hope, which shall “perish” at the very time when enjoyment is expected!—Be awakened then, ye self-deceivers, and know that your formality, like the harlot’s paint, is only a false and borrowed beauty, which shall melt away when you draw near the fire: and however you may now hope, while under the threatenings of God, be assured that you shall not be able to hope when under the execution of them; despair shall then become essential to your misery.—My brethren, a dream so transient, so momentary, is not worth the having: for the Lord’s sake, then, awake in time, repent unfeignedly of your past hypocrisy, and “give no sleep to your eyes, nor flumber to your eye-lids,” till your souls be acquainted with the power of godliness, that you may have something better to lean upon than delusive forms, when all earthly props shall slide from beneath you: “O seek the Lord while he is yet to be found, and call upon him while he is near.”

But there are finners of another kind, to whom

whom this subject leads me to speak ; those, I mean, who have not so much as the *form of godliness*.—You, I doubt not, have got a great deal to say against hypocrites ; perhaps too you are very well pleased that so much has been said to expose them in the course of this sermon ; and now you exult in the thought, that such a hateful denomination cannot be applied to you ; if you are not godly, yet surely you are honest ; for you do not pretend to be godly.—We shall, by and by, examine your boasted honesty ; in the mean time, it deserves your serious consideration, that, by your own confession, you are in great measure useless in the world ; as you contribute nothing either to the glory of God, or to the spiritual improvement of your brethren around you.—Now, here the formalist hath plainly the advantage of you : for though he neglects and destroys his own soul, yet, by his fair outside, and perhaps by the exercise of his gifts, he may recommend religion to the esteem and choice of others ; like the signpost, which, though it hath its station without, doth nevertheless mark the door to

strangers, and invite them into the house: whereas you neither enter in yourselves, nor give any assistance to others; but, on the contrary, do much to discourage and hinder them.—But honesty, you say, is the qualification you chiefly value, and you are confident that your claim to that is unquestionable. — Not so unquestionable as you imagine. — As you do not profess Atheism, you must be understood to acknowledge the being of a God; and as you have not publicly renounced your baptism, you certainly mean to pass for Christians. None of you, I suppose, are willing to be reputed the enemies of God and of Christ; on the contrary, would you not exclaim against that man as a censorious malevolent hypocrite, who should venture to hint the remotest suspicion of this kind?—And now wherein doth your honesty lie? You would be thought to love God, yet you live in open contempt of his authority, while you withhold that worship and homage which are due to him: Is this honesty?—You call yourselves Christians, yet you practically reject the institutions of Christ, and call his  
most

most sacred commandments behind your back: Is that to be honest, to profess one thing, and to do the contrary?—This, I apprehend, is the very essence of hypocrisy: so that if you hate hypocrites, you are bound in justice to hate yourselves; for even you are hypocrites no less than the formalist, though you are not commonly branded with that opprobrious title. The difference betwixt you lies chiefly in this: The *formalist* is a sort of bashful hypocrite, who, because he cannot deny the debt, makes a shew of paying part, and would be thought to pay the whole: whereas the *profane sinner*, who retains the appellation of *Christian*, though he pays no part of what he acknowledgeth to be due, would nevertheless be reputed an honest man; and therefore he too is a hypocrite as well as the other, with as little sense, and with much less modesty.

I SHALL conclude this discourse with a few advices, for the help of those who are aiming at real *godliness*, and would not be deceived with names and counterfeits.

Let your religion, then, my dear friends,

be principally seated in the heart; and never reckon that you are possessed of it, so long as it lodges merely in the understanding. Knowledge and faith are in order to practice; and we neither know nor believe to any good purpose, unless our knowledge and faith influence our practice, and make us truly better men.—Be sure to live upon the great fundamentals of religion, and let not your attention to these be diverted by an intemperate zeal about lesser things. Place not your religion in disputable points and ineffectual opinions, but in those weightier matters of the law and gospel, which are of undoubted importance, and in which holy men, among all the different denominations of Christians, are better agreed than is commonly apprehended.—Choose God for your portion and felicity; beware of thinking, that any thing besides himself is necessary to make you happy; and live daily upon Christ Jesus, as the only Mediator by whom you can either have access to God, or acceptance with him.—Indulge no sin; plead for no infirmity; but make it the daily business of your lives, to “mor-  
tify

“tify the deeds of the body,” and “to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.”—Walk continually as in the sight of a holy, just, and heart-searching God; and study to be the same in secret that you wish to appear in public.—Rest not in a low degree of holiness, but love, and long, and strive for the highest.—And for these purposes, pray without ceasing for those promised influences of divine grace, which alone can heal your diseased natures, and carry you forward from one degree of holiness to another, till, being ripened for glory, an entrance shall in due time be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be glory and honour, dominion and thanksgiving, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## S E R M O N V.

ISAIAH liii. 3.

*He is despised and rejected of men:—He was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

**T**HAT the whole of this chapter relates to the Messiah, is so universally acknowledged, that I need not spend any of your time in proving it: and whosoever hath read the history of our Saviour's life with a proper degree of attention, cannot fail to have remarked the exact accomplishment of that part of the prophecy which I have chosen for the subject of the following discourse.—“ Christ came unto his own, but his own received him not.” The learned, the rich, and the mighty among the Jews, were almost universally combined against him; the most opposite parties, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, united their endeavours to discredit



dit his doctrine and mission: he was condemned by the supreme council of the nation as an impostor and blasphemer; nay, the whole body of the people disowned him in the most public and contemptuous manner before Pontius Pilate the Roman governor, crying out as with one voice, “ Away with him, away with him! crucify him, crucify him!” Thus was he *despised and rejected of men*, in the days of his humiliation, to which the prophet more immediately refers.

But as the Jews are not the only people chargeable with this crime; as Christ hath been, and still is, *despised and rejected* by many, even by many of those who were baptized into his church, and are called by his name; we may be allowed to consider the prediction in my text, as reaching beyond the time of our Saviour’s abode on this earth, and looking forward to all that injurious contempt, which, in after ages, should be cast upon the blessed Jesus, by pretended friends, as well as by open and professed enemies.

In this large extent I shall at present take  
the

the liberty to discourse upon these words. And my design is,—*first*, To show in what respects it may still be said that men *despise and reject* the Saviour; and,—*secondly*, To inquire whence it is that they do this?—After which, I shall lay before you the heinous nature of their guilt; and direct you to the proper improvement of the whole.

I BEGIN with showing in what respects it may still be said that *Christ is despised and rejected of men*.

True it is, that his glorious person is no more exposed to the outrage of men. That body which was “scourged,” “buffeted,” “spit upon,” and “crucified,” is far beyond the reach of any such abusive treatment. He is now exalted to his Father’s right hand; where he is adored and worshipped with the most lowly reverence by all the heavenly host. But yet there are some other, and no less criminal, respects, in which he is still *despised and rejected* of many. — I speak not here of those baptized infidels, who openly “deny the Lord  
“ that

“ that bought them,” and traduce the whole of his religion as a mere human contrivance ;—neither shall I take much notice of those who, while they profess a general regard to Christ, do, at the same time, entertain and publish opinions evidently inconsistent with a real esteem of him : though it cannot be wholly overlooked, that such there are in the Christian world ;—some denying his divinity, and others his satisfaction ;—some disowning the necessity, and others the virtue and efficacy of his grace :—All which are so many different ways of vilifying the great Redeemer, and detracting from his true honour and dignity.—But, passing these, my design is, to show, that even among such as you, my brethren, who I trust are not tainted with these doctrinal errors, it is possible to find some who ungratefully *despise and reject* the Saviour. May God open their hearts to receive conviction, that they may no longer delude themselves with “ a name to live,” while they are spiritually “ dead,” and liable to everlasting destruction.

In

In general, then, all who are grossly ignorant of the religion of Jesus, must necessarily be reputed despisers of him: for as the means of acquiring knowledge are so easy, and the opportunities of receiving instruction so frequent, it must be owing to some culpable neglect of their own, if any who are capable of learning other things, be unacquainted with the great doctrines of Christianity; and this neglect too plainly betrays a contemptuous disregard of Christ himself.

More particularly, men may be said to *despise* Christ, when they do not receive him as their alone Saviour, as the true, the living, nay, the only way to the Father.—He is set forth in Scripture as the sole mediator between God and man; who, by his atoning sacrifice, hath satisfied divine justice, and purchased the Holy Spirit to heal our diseased natures, and thereby render us meet for the perfection of our happiness, in the enjoyment of that God who cannot behold iniquity: so that we do not properly express our esteem of him, unless we acknowledge him in that important character,

character, and pay to him those practical regards which it claims.——To honour him is, to acquiesce, thankfully, in this ordinance of God for redeeming his fallen creatures; it is, to renounce all hope of being justified or saved by any other means, and to rely wholly upon the sacrifice and intercession of this High Priest, for the pardon of our sins, and the acceptance of our persons with God; it is, to apply that blood to ourselves which “cleanseth from all sin,” and to receive his Spirit to dwell within us, and to sway the sceptre over all the powers and faculties of our souls.——A lawyer is honoured when men employ him, and commit their cause to his management; a physician is honoured when men apply to him for advice, and use his prescriptions for their cure:—In like manner, the great Advocate with the Father, and the sovereign Physician of souls, is honoured, not when men talk well of him, and verbally profess an esteem of him, but when they actually commit their cause to him, and place their entire dependence upon him for pardon and grace, and complete salvation;

tion; and they that come short of this, are in reality no other than despisers of Christ; and, as such, shall be disowned by him at his second coming.

Again, Christ is *despised and rejected of men*, when they practically deny his authority, by breaking his commandments. We are expressly told, “that all power is committed to him in heaven and on earth; —for God hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things for the church.” Now, to honour him in this character, is to yield a cheerful and unreserved obedience to his laws; it is to acknowledge his sovereignty over us, and his property in us, not only as our Creator, but likewise as our Redeemer, who hath bought us with his blood; and in consequence thereof, to glorify him both with our bodies and our spirits, which are his. Therefore, all they who make their own will the rule of their conduct, who do not resign themselves entirely to the disposal and government of this King of Zion, whatever their profession be, they certainly despise and reject him; and though

not

not in words perhaps, yet by their deeds they say with the rebellious Jews, *We will not have this man to reign over us.* “Why call ye me Lord, Lord,” said our Saviour, “and do not the things which I say?” plainly intimating, that all outward expressions of esteem, are mere hypocrisy and empty grimace, without a sincere and unlimited subjection to his laws.

Further, men *despise* Christ, when they do not give him the chief room in their hearts, nor prefer him in their choice to every thing else. The language of a true disciple is, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth whom I desire besides thee.” If Christ be not esteemed and loved above every thing, he is not truly esteemed or loved at all: and this I take to be the meaning of these strong expressions, *Luke xiv. 26.* “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.” They who are not willing to part with ease and pleasures, with riches,

and honours, and friends, with whatever is dear to them in a present world, nay, with life itself, for Christ's sake, plainly discover that they have no just sense of his worth and excellence: They who do not prefer him to the whole world, and cannot rest in his love as a sufficient portion, without any thing else, pretend what they will, they do not truly esteem him. And, to conclude this head,

They too must be numbered among the *despisers* of Christ, who do not publicly confess him before men, or who wilfully neglect any of those ordinances he hath instituted, as the methods of testifying our subjection to him, and the means of receiving benefits from him. I really do not see how any man can be said to esteem Christ, who doth not embrace every proper opportunity of conversing with him, or of hearing tidings concerning him: and, in particular, the habitual neglect of social worship, either in the family or in the church, hath such a strong appearance of estrangement and disregard, that it is hard for me to conceive, how any person can persist in it,  
who



who doth not in his heart despise the Saviour.

Thus have I endeavoured to shew, in what respects it may be said, even at this present time, that Christ *is despised and rejected of men.*

THE causes of this contempt are the *second* thing to be enquired into. And I apprehend—the *first* and main cause of this contempt of Christ among the hearers of the gospel, is a secret unbelief which they are not aware of. For did they truly believe the doctrine concerning the Saviour;—that he only “is the way, the truth, and the life; and that no man cometh,” or can come, “to the Father, but by him;”—that he is God’s beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased;—and that without an interest in him, and entire subjection to him, they cannot be saved;—it would be impossible to despise him in any of these ways I have mentioned: for *to them who thus believe, Christ is, and must be, precious.* But men deceive themselves: they have a vague, confused, and indeterminate opinion, and

are accustomed to say in the general, that the Scriptures are the word of God; but they never saw the evidence of their truth in such a light as to be thoroughly persuaded of it. They think the doctrines contained in the Christian revelation *may* be true; but here they stop; and because they are not downright infidels, they fancy themselves believers, when in truth they are not.

*2dly*, The love of this world is another cause of mens contempt of Christ, and of his gospel. They can afford him honourable titles, and external homage; but to follow him fully, will not consist with their worldly desires and aims. Such was the young ruler, who addressed that important question to our Saviour, " Good Master, " what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" *Luke xviii. 18.* He appeared thoughtful and serious, beyond what might have been expected from his age and rank; and had gone an uncommon length, in an outward conformity to the law: but when our Lord commanded him " to sell all, and give to " the poor, he was sad at that saying, and  
" went

“ went away sorrowful, because he had “ large possessions.” Of this we have a striking illustration in the parable of the marriage-supper, which is recorded in the 22d chapter of Matthew’s gospel. The invitation is very warm and pressing at the 4th verse; “ Behold, I have prepared my “ dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are “ killed, and all things are ready: come “ to the marriage.” But it follows immediately, “ They made light of it, and went “ their ways, one to his farm, another to “ his merchandise.” This, my brethren, still continues to be a very common cause of mens despising and rejecting Christ. They see the world, but they see not the celestial glory: the one is present; the other only future, and therefore too remote to work upon their affections. If both could be obtained, they would, no doubt, be very well satisfied; and if religion and their worldly interest take one road, they will be ready enough to pay the compliment to our Lord, and to say, that they follow him: but when these separate, then their contempt discovers itself: they cleave to the

world, and forfake Chrift.—“ Demas hath  
 “ forfaken me,” faid Paul, “ having loved  
 “ this prefent world.”——So true is that  
 faying of the Apoftle John (1 *Epift.* ii. 15.),  
 “ If any man love the world, the love of  
 “ the Father,” and with equal reafon we  
 may add, the love of the Redeemer, “ is not  
 “ in him.”

A *third* caufe of this contempt is mens  
 ignorance of their own condition: like the  
 church of the Laodiceans, they “ boaft, that  
 “ they are rich, and increafed with goods,  
 “ and ftanding in need of nothing; and  
 “ know not that they are wretched, and  
 “ miferable, and poor, and blind, and na-  
 “ ked.” Some have fo high an opinion of  
 their own underftanding, that they fee no  
 need of a prophet to inftitute them. Others  
 have fuch low thoughts of the evil of fin,  
 and fuch a conceit of their own righteouf-  
 nefs and worth, that they fee as little need  
 of a prieft to expiate their guilt, and re-  
 concile them to God. A third fort lay fo  
 much ftrefs on their unaffifted powers, and  
 the efficacy of their own refolutions and  
 endeavours, that a king to fubdue them by  
 his

his grace and spirit, appears altogether superfluous. Thus Christ is despised through mens ignorance and pride: unacquainted with their state of darknes, guilt, and corruption, they reject him who cometh in the name of the Lord to save them;—they feel not their diseases, and therefore treat the physician with contempt and scorn. Once more, in the

*4th* place, Not a few pour contempt upon Christ, and reject his offers from day to day, from an opinion that they may obtain his aid at what time soever they shall choose to ask it. They say not indeed with the Atheist,—" Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die:" neither do they say with the gross Antinomian,—Let us sin without fear, seeing Christ hath died for us, and is therefore determined to save us at any rate. But they say what is equally absurd, Let us take a full draught of the sweet poison of sin, seeing the remedy is so near at hand, that we may apply it when we please.—O that this were not too common! I am afraid, it will appear upon inquiry, that there is too, too much of this

vile presumption in our hearts. But can there be a greater dishonour done to Christ? Must his bloody sufferings, and unparalleled love, support our rebellion, and embolden us to sin? Can any thing be more criminal? — But this I shall have occasion to speak of immediately; and shall only say, at present, that thousands, and ten thousands, have perished, who once had the remedy as near them as you have, and who also, perhaps, dreamed of the same facility in applying it. To which I may add, that out of your own mouths you shall be condemned at last, and shall find nothing to plead in arrest of judgement, when God shall say to you, Why did you not repent, and believe in the Saviour, seeing you thought it so easy, that you could do it when you pleased?

O that men were wise! that they understood these things, and would consider, in this day of their merciful visitation, the things that belong to their peace, before they be for ever hid from their eyes! I cannot allow myself to think, that any of you are already acquainted with all the deformity

formity of the sin I have been speaking of; and that, after viewing it in its full dimensions, you are perfectly reconciled to it, and resolved to persist in it. I would gladly hope that this is not the case; but rather that the great enemy of your happiness has hitherto kept you in the dark, and in great measure concealed from you, both your guilt and your danger. Perhaps, to this moment you have never seriously thought upon your ways, but blindly followed the fashion of the world, and suffered yourselves to be carried along with the croud, without any suspicion, that you are chargeable with crimes of such a hellish nature, as are included in *despising and rejecting* the Saviour. I shall therefore proceed, in the

*Third* place, To give you a short representation of the malignity of this sin; which, if duly attended to, may be of use to dissolve the enchantment, by which the god of this world hath so long blinded your eyes, and rendered you insensible to the misery of your condition.

Consider,

Consider, then, that to *despise and reject* such a Saviour, is the blackest ingratitude that can possibly be imagined. It was a cutting question that Christ put to the Jews, when they went about to kill him: “Many good works have I shewed you  
 “ from my Father, for which of these  
 “ works do ye stone me?”——To render evil for good, hatred for love, is accounted monstrous among men; and the person who behaves in such a manner towards his fellow-creature, is justly condemned and abhorred by all: and yet the most heinous and detestable instance of ingratitude among men is as nothing, when compared with your ingratitude towards God. Did he, without any solicitation from you, and not only without, but even contrary to, your desert, send his own Son into the world to save you? Did the Lord Jesus Christ, “the brightness of  
 “ the Father’s glory, and the express  
 “ image of his person,” assume your nature; become a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs; lead a poor, afflicted, persecuted life; and at last die a shameful,



ful, painful, and accursed death; to satisfy offended justice, and to render your happiness consistent with the honour of the divine government?—And is this your requital?

I beseech you, my brethren, to bestow some attention upon this; and if your hearts have any softness at all, such unparalleled baseness cannot fail to make the deepest impression upon them. Does this astonishing undeserved goodness merit no regard? Doth God's unspeakable gift to men deserve no returns of gratitude and praise? Shall the blood of Christ be shed in vain, nay, trampled under foot, as an unholy thing? Will you "crucify the Son of God afresh," and say, by your neglect of his great salvation, "Away with him! away with him!"—"We have loved strangers, and after them we will go?" Surely you cannot, you will not, pretend to justify this conduct: there is something in it so disingenuous and perverse, so shocking and unnatural, that I am persuaded, when you attend to it, you must

must loathe and abhor yourselves on account of it.

But this is not the whole of your guilt: Your ingratitude is heightened by the most insolent contempt both of the wisdom and goodness of God. You charge God with folly, when you reject the terms of the gospel-covenant: for your behaviour plainly implies one of the following accusations; either that this method of salvation is unnecessary, and that God from all eternity hath employed his counsels about a needless affair; or else that it is ineffectual, and that the person whom God hath chosen to execute this design, is not worthy to be depended upon; or that the terms proposed are so rigorous and severe, that a wise man would rather choose to perish than submit to them.—Thus dost thou arraign thy God, O sinner!—And art thou able to make good thy charge? Dost thou hope to prevail in the day when God shall plead with thee?

Nay, further, by *despising and rejecting* Christ, you openly proclaim war against the Most High, and bid him defiance. He hath

hath “ set his King upon his holy hill of “ Zion,” and “ put all things under his “ feet:” he hath ordained, by an irrever- sible decree, that “ all men should honour “ the Son, even as they honour the Fa- “ ther:” he hath published to the world, that there is no other name given among men, by which they can be saved, but the name of Jesus;—that this glorious Media- tor is constituted the final Judge of man- kind; and that they who do not bow to the sceptre of his grace, shall be dashed in pieces with his rod of iron, in that day, when he shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, to take vengeance upon those who knew not God, and obeyed not this gospel which we now preach to you:—And yet, in the face of all these declarations, you proudly say, by your conduct, “ We will not have this man to “ reign over us;” we neither fear his power, nor court his grace, but are determined to stand on our own defence.

Such, my brethren, is the malignity of your sin: it includes the blackest ingrati- tude, heightened by the most insolent con- tempt,

tempt, nay, an open defiance of the omnipotent God; rejecting his offered mercy, and daring him to execute all the rigour of his justice.—I do not mean, that you are at present conscious of this complicated impiety; I rather suppose, that you are startled when you hear it mentioned, and are ready to reply as Hazael did to Elisha, “Is thy servant a dog, that he should do these things?”—But be assured, all I have now said shall be made good against you at last if you continue to despise and reject the Saviour: and the greatest mercy that can befall you in the mean time, is, to get those eyes opened which Satan hath so long closed, that you may see and abhor your guilt in this matter. O be exhorted, then, deliberately to weigh the representation I have given you! and think what must become of you, if you go out of this world with such a dreadful load of guilt as I have endeavoured to describe.

By this time you must all see your concern in this subject. I have told you, that it is possible, even among such as you, who attend upon ordinances, and profess a general

neral esteem of Christ, to find *despisers and rejecters of him*: I have mentioned sundry instances of contempt, which persons, who are neither Jews nor infidels, but who call, and even think themselves, the disciples of Jesus, may be guilty of; and you have just now heard the heinous nature, and the high aggravations, of this sin: so that, you see, they are no trivial matters I have been talking of, but matters which infinitely concern the whole Christian world, and yourselves in particular. — I now come to point out the improvement, which I humbly wish, and fervently pray, that every one of you, my dear friends and brethren, would make of this subject.

I would have you, then, as the best and most necessary improvement of all that you have heard, to enter immediately into your own hearts, and make an impartial inquiry into your esteem of Christ, according to the marks I formerly gave you. O beware of self-deceit in this trial!—You may weep at the history of his sufferings, when you read or hear how barbarously he was treated  
by

by the Jews; and yet you may *reject* him. — You may feel some emotions of gratitude and joy, when you hear of the greatness of his love, and the value of his purchase, and yet perish for *despising* him. — You may, under alarms of conscience, feel strong desires after him to save you from the wrath of God, and, after all, be heart enemies to him. — Nay, you may be zealous reprovers of others for despising Christ, and paint the deformity of this sin in stronger colours than I have been able to do; — but, alas! if you have no better evidence for proving your esteem of him, — your present trust is no better than “the spider’s web,” and your hope, in the time of your greatest need, shall be as “the giving up of the ghost.” In short, your esteem of Christ must be greater than your esteem of all the profits, and pleasures, and honours, of this world; and you must manifest this esteem, by a cordial acceptance of him, and an entire subjection to him; otherwise you shall be condemned at last, as persons who have *despised and rejected* this great Redeemer.

Thus, my brethren, have I held up the  
glass,

glafs, in which, if you are not wilfully blind, you may behold your true picture:—and if you have attended, and fuffered confcience to do its office, fome of you, I am perfuaded, must be convinced, that you are the persons who have hitherto *despifed and rejected* the Saviour; and therefore it is time for me to ask, What is your present resolution? Is this a state to be continued in? Would any of you, if left to your own choice, be willing to be found in this condition at last?—Brethren, this is a ferious question, and ought not to be flightly paffed over: The Lord Jefus now waiteth upon you for an answer;—but remember, that ere long you must wait upon him for a doom: As therefore you would be found of him in peace, come now to a speedy and firm determination.—You have despifed him too long already; O do not add this farther instance of contempt, to hesitate, while I now plead with you, whether or no you should this moment renounce all his competitors, and give him the chief room in your hearts.—May I hope you are resolved? Happy you, thrice happy, if you be fo! Now you begin to live, your former unworthy

behaviour shall all be forgiven; and that compassionate Redeemer, who procured sparing mercy for you even when you despised him, and, by his gracious interposition, hath kept you alive till this hour, will not reject your penitent believing souls, but will accept your esteem and love, though late; and, in return, will bestow upon you all the enriching benefits of his purchase. But if any of you shall justify your former contempt, and resolve to persist in it,—I must declare the righteous sentence of God; and I shall do it in the words of John the Baptist, (*John* iii. 36.) “ He that believeth not  
 “ the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath  
 “ of God abideth on him.”—Let my counsel therefore be acceptable unto you: “ Seek  
 “ the Lord while he is yet to be found, and  
 “ call upon him while he is near.—Kiss  
 “ the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish  
 “ from the way: for if once his wrath be  
 “ kindled but a little, then shall it be found  
 “ that they,” and they only, “ are blessed,  
 “ who put their trust in him.”



## S E R M O N VI.

ROMANS iii. 19.

*Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*

**T**HE great design of this epistle, is to lead men to Christ, as the only refuge for perishing finners: and because none will value a remedy, but they who feel their disease, and wish for health, the Apostle therefore, in the two foregoing chapters, examines the condition both of *Gentiles* and *Jews*; under which denominations, the whole posterity of Adam are included; and proves, by plain undeniable facts, that all, without exception, are guilty before God, and consequently, that all stand in need of a Saviour.———In the

verses immediately preceding my text, he brings several quotations from the Old-Testament writings, which give a very strong and melancholy representation of the corruption and depravity of the human kind.—But lest the Jews should alledge, that these, and other passages of the like nature, were only descriptive of the Gentile nations, and could not justly be extended to them, whom God had chosen from the rest of the world, and set apart for himself as his peculiar inheritance; he judged it proper to remind them, that the sacred books, from which he had taken the above description, were primarily addressed to the Jews, and designed for their instruction and use: *We know, says he, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law*; consequently these quotations, which are all expressly contained in the law, may and ought to be considered as a just representation of the state of those to whom that law or revelation was given. And he further adds, that they were inserted in Scripture for this very purpose, that the plea of innocence being taken

taken away from the Jews as well as from the Gentiles, *every mouth might be stopped, and thus all the world might become guilty before God.* From which words, as they stand connected with the Apostle's reasoning, we learn, in the

*First* place, That it is extremely difficult to bring men to a proper sense and acknowledgement of their guilt and misery.

I hope none will be so unreasonable as to require a laboured proof of this observation; for you will easily perceive, that I can have no other witnesses to produce but yourselves. I affirm, that it is so, upon the authority of Scripture; and can only appeal to your own hearts for the truth of it.——Besides, none will deny this who are already convinced of their guilt and misery: for this is an essential property of real conviction, that the deeper it is, it renders the person still more sensible of the natural hardness of his heart; so that nothing grieves him so much, as that he cannot grieve more for sinning against God: And they who are of an opposite character, who

boast, " That they are rich, and increased  
" with goods, and standing in need of no-  
" thing;" such persons, I say, prove the  
truth of this observation, by demanding a  
proof of it, and are themselves examples of  
the thing they deny.

I know it is an easy matter to bring men  
to a general acknowledgement, that they  
are sinners. Many are ready enough to  
confess this much, who, at the same time,  
have a very good opinion of their state:  
for though they cannot lay claim to per-  
fect innocence, yet they look upon their  
guilt as a very trivial thing, and imagine  
that their vices are more than overbalan-  
ced by the virtues they are possessed of;  
and thus, " being ignorant of God's righ-  
" teousness," or of that righteousness which  
is necessary to justify a sinner in the sight  
of God, " they go about to establish their  
" own righteousness, and will not sub-  
" mit themselves unto the righteousness of  
" God."

Pride is the hereditary disease of our na-  
tures: we derive it from our first parents;  
and though it is subdued in all who are  
sanctified,

sanctified, yet still it lives within them, and is always the last part of the old man that dies. Nay, it is apt to grow upon the ruin of other sins, as we see in that noted instance of the Pharisee, who, under the specious pretext of thanking God for his grace, went up into the temple, merely to give vent to his self-admiration: "God," said he, "I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers; I fast twice a-week, I pay tithes of all that I possess." What he said might be true; nay, our Lord seems plainly to admit that it was so: yet he tells us, that this vain-glorious creature carried nothing away with him but his self-conceit: he returned to his own house without the blessing of God: "For every one that exalteth himself, shall be abased; whereas he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted."

This, my brethren, is one main cause why the preaching of the gospel hath so little effect. Could we bring men to a sense of their guilt and misery, they would gladly listen to the tidings of a Saviour. But this is difficult work indeed. We can scarcely

persuade the most profligate wretch to think himself in danger, till God lay his hand upon him, and set death before his eyes. Judge, then, how hard a task it must be, to convince the more close and reserved sinner! who probably has got beneath him some empty forms of duty, upon which he leans, and confidently presumes that all shall be well with him.

I have frequently observed, that no sermons are so tasteless to many hearers, as those which treat of the Saviour: they can listen to other subjects; but when we talk of Jesus Christ, and of that great salvation "which angels desire to look into," they dismiss their attention, and perhaps make a shift to sleep in their seats; when, God knows, were they aware of the thousandth part of their danger, they would find it difficult enough to sleep on their beds.— Did we really see ourselves in a just light, could we divest ourselves, for a little, of our pride and prejudice, till we got one serious and impartial view of our natural condition, this would render a Saviour so necessary, that we should never be at rest till we had secured

secured his friendship: But, as our Lord himself hath told us, “ they that are whole  
“ have no need of the phyfician, but they  
“ that are fick,” I fhall therefore proceed to fhew, in the

*Second* place, That all men, without exception, are guilty before God; and that whoever attends to the Scriptures of truth, or gives ear to the testimony of his own confcience, may foon difcover fuch plain convincing evidence of guilt, as is fufficient to ftop his mouth, and to render him fpeechlefs and felf-condemned in the prefence of a juft and holy God. ——— This propofition is perfectly confiftent with the former: for the difficulty of bringing men to a right fenfe and acknowledgement of their guilt and misery, doth not arife from any want of evidence, but is purely owing to their own inattention and pride: the fad truth is clear as noon-day; but they fhut their eyes, and will not fee it.

As the testimony of Scripture is full and explicit, fo the fhort abftract contained in the foregoing verfes, fpeaks upon this head  
with

with the utmost possible precision. “ There  
 “ is none righteous, no not one: there is  
 “ none that understandeth, there is none  
 “ that seeketh after God. They are all  
 “ gone out of the way, they are together  
 “ become unprofitable, there is none that  
 “ doth good, no not one. Their throat is  
 “ an open sepulchre; with their tongues  
 “ they have used deceit; the poison of asps  
 “ is under their lips: whose mouth is full  
 “ of cursing and bitterness. Their feet  
 “ are swift to shed blood. Destruction and  
 “ misery are in their ways: and the way of  
 “ peace have they not known. There is  
 “ no fear of God before their eyes.” And  
 these things, the Apostle informs us, were  
 written, not merely to stop the mouths of  
 some notorious offenders, who proclaim  
 their sins as Sodom, and hide them not;  
 but *that every mouth might be stopped, and all  
 the world become guilty before God.* Accord-  
 ingly, at the 23d verse of this chapter, he  
 concludes upon the whole evidence in the  
 following words: “ For all have sinned, and  
 “ come short of the glory of God.”

This truth hath been attested by the  
 most



most eminent faints that ever lived upon earth. “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity,” said David, “and in sin did my mother conceive me:” And therefore he pleads in another place, “Enter not into judgement with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy fight shall no man living be justified.” —“We are all as an unclean thing,” said the Prophet Isaiah, “and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away.” —Neither have the faints under the New-Testament dispensation been any whit behind them in penitent acknowledgements of their guilt. Paul styles himself “the chief of sinners;” and the beloved disciple declares, in express terms, that all pretensions to innocence are not only false, but blasphemous: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” —Nay, “if we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and his word is not in us.” 1 *John* i. 8, 9.

This further appears from the various kinds of misery which abound in the world,  
 especially

especially death, from which none of Adam's posterity are exempted. These do necessarily suppose guilt; for it is not agreeable to the justice of God to afflict and punish innocent creatures.—Now, this mean of conviction is so plain and obvious, that a man must do great violence to his reason, before he can resist the evidence it affords. Goodness and justice are attributes which are universally considered as most essential to the Supreme Being; and yet it is impossible to account for the present calamitous state of mankind, in a consistency with these perfections, upon any other supposition than this, that “all have sinned,” and thereby incurred his righteous displeasure.—So that you see there is no penury of witnesses upon this head. The Scriptures expressly declare, that all are sinners;—the most eminent saints under both dispensations have attested the truth of this assertion;—and the many awful tokens of the divine displeasure, which we daily behold and feel, render it absurd to suppose the contrary.

But there is yet another witness behind,  
whose

whose testimony can be liable to no objection; a witness which every man will find within his own breast;—I mean, *conscience*, to which I now appeal for the truth of this matter. And here I shall renew the question which Solomon proposed many ages ago: “Who can say I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sins?” Can you discover nothing amiss in your temper and practice? Do they in all points agree with the rule of God’s word? Dare any of you appeal to the justice of God for acquittal? and claim happiness as the due reward of your obedience? Say, O man! hast thou no need at all of pardoning mercy? Wilt thou give it under thy hand, that thou shalt never plead the merits of a Saviour for thy justification? that at the hour of death, or in the day of judgement, thou shalt never once implore his help, nor cry for mercy, but stand upon the foundation of thy personal righteousness before his impartial tribunal?—Or, rather, my brethren, are you not conscious of innumerable instances of guilt, wherein you have acted in direct opposition, not only to  
the

the written law, but to the inward sense and authority of your own minds;—doing what ye knew was displeasing to God;—and that, not by the mere force of sudden temptation, but coolly and deliberately, in the face of those arguments which ought in all reason to have restrained you from them?—I think I may venture to affirm, that there is not one person here present who is not able to recollect several instances of this kind: And if our own blind and partial hearts do now condemn us, alas! how shall we justify ourselves at the bar of that God “who is greater than our hearts, “and knoweth all things?”—This leads me to observe, in the

*Third* place, That one great end of the law is, to humble the pride of men; that, from a conviction of their guilty and miserable estate by nature, they may, as it were, be compelled, by a happy necessity, to flee for relief to the gospel-method of salvation through Christ.

This important truth is directly asserted by the Apostle in my text, and frequently repeated

repeated in other parts of his writings. Nay, the principal scope of this epistle is, to call off the Jews from any dependence upon their own righteousness, by giving them a fair representation of the spirituality, extent, and rigour of the law; that finding themselves unable either to answer its demands, or to endure its curse, they might thankfully embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, who is indeed “the end of the law for  
“righteousness to every one that believeth.”—And the subserviency of the law to the gospel, or the use of the law to lead men to the Saviour, will evidently appear, if we consider,

That the law demands nothing less than a perfect unfinning obedience to all its precepts; it makes no manner of allowance for the infirmities of men; for “whosoever  
“shall keep the whole law, and yet offend  
“in one point,” in the eye of the Lawgiver, “is guilty of all.” It declares what is due to God from his creatures, and insists upon the payment of it even to the uttermost farthing. In the law, strictly considered, there is no provision or promise of  
pardon

pardon to the guilty: on the contrary, it denounces condemnation and wrath against all transgressors of what kind soever; for thus it is written, “Curfed is every one  
“who continueth not in all things which  
“are written in the book of the law to do  
“them.” It is not enough to do *some* things which are commanded; we must do them *all*: Nor is it even sufficient that we do all things for a season; we must also *continue* in them, otherwise we forfeit the divine friendship, and become liable to the wrath of an infinitely just and omnipotent God. This is the genuine voice of the law, *Do and live*; “but the soul that sinneth shall  
“surely die.” It knoweth no middle sentence between these two: it doth not whisper one word of mercy; but the smallest deviation subjects the transgressor to the justice of God, and to all the fatal effects of his indignation, both in this life and in that which is to come.

Now, this being the case, it is easy to discern the subserviency of the law to the gospel; or, in other words, the use of the law to lead men to the Saviour. The law dif-

discovers sin, and at the same time demands an unflinching obedience: None of us can plead innocence, and the law admits of no excuse for guilt; nay, it is not only silent as to the doctrine of forgiveness, which might leave some room for conjecture and hope, but in plain and awful words pronounces the sentence of death, and dooms to irremediable punishment all the workers of iniquity without exception. Thus the sinner is "bound hand and foot," as it were "and cast into prison;" *his mouth is stopped*, and nothing remains for him, but either to continue in misery, and bear the curse of God for ever; or else to appeal from the law to the gospel, and to claim the benefit of that indemnity which Christ hath purchased with his blood, and freely offers to all who, condemning themselves, and renouncing their own righteousnesses, flee to him as their hope and city of refuge. — From all which, we may conclude, in the

*Fourth and last* place, That every apologising sinner, who opens his mouth in his

own vindication, doth impiously give God the lie, and exclude himself from the offers of his mercy and grace; whereas the humble self-condemning sinner lies, so to speak, in the very road of mercy, and shall through faith in Christ Jesus obtain salvation with eternal glory.

This inference is so just and obvious, that it scarcely needs any illustration. For if “all are sinners;” and if this be one great end of the law, to bring men to a sense and acknowledgement of their guilt, that they may be compelled to flee to Christ Jesus for relief;—what foolish, self-destroying creatures must those be, who, in despite of the clearest evidence, and in flat contradiction to the only method of deliverance and hope, will offer to babble in their own defence? —What can you propose by this conduct, O sinners! God puts it to your choice, as it were, in what court you would be tried, whether you will plead at the tribunal of justice, or of mercy? If you penitently acknowledge your guilt, and cry for mercy through the great Mediator, he is infinitely more willing to bestow it upon you, than  
you



you can be to ask it of him :—But if you proudly insist in your own vindication ; if you extenuate your guilt, or depend upon any thing in yourselves for pardon and acceptance, you thereby incur the rigour of the law ; you “ shall have judgement without mercy,” and “ Jesus Christ can profit you nothing.”

BE persuaded, then, my dear friends, as the proper improvement of all that has been said, “ to humble yourselves presently under the mighty hand of God, that you may be exalted in due time.” See and acknowledge your guilt and unworthiness, that you may not be finally *condemned with the world* ; and beg of God, that he may search and try you, and make you thoroughly acquainted with your real condition ;—that, finding yourselves “ wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,” you may repair, without delay, to that all-sufficient Saviour, “ whose blood cleanseth from all sin,” and “ who

“ him, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

As for you upon whom the law hath already had its effect, who are weary and heavy laden with the burden of sin; be not discouraged; the seeds of consolation are sown in your grief; this weeping night shall ere long be succeeded by a joyful morning; and “ upon you who” thus “ fear his name, shall the Sun of righteousness” shortly “ arise with healing in his wings:” For this gracious temper is the peculiar work of the Spirit of God;—it is he who brings that light into the soul, whereby its natural deformity is seen; it is he who casts down those proud imaginations which exalt themselves against God, and hide from the sinner his poverty and wretchedness: and it is this divine Spirit, who, by the ministry of the law, removes those false grounds of hope upon which the sinner was accustomed to lean, and obligeth him to ask that interesting question, “ What shall I do to be saved?”—As John Baptist prepared the way for Christ’s public appearance, by rousing the world with the doctrine of repentance;

pentance; in like manner, the Holy Spirit prepares the heart for the reception of the same glorious Redeemer, by such painful and humbling convictions, as render him both necessary and desirable to the soul: And therefore it ought to be matter of joy and thankfulness to the sinner, when God smites his heart with a sense of sin; of such sickness, it may truly be said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." Hereby, as it were, he dislodges his enemies, and empties the soul of every other guest, that he may come and fill it with his own gracious presence.

Lift up your heads, then, O trembling sinners! look forward but a very little way, and you may see to the end of that dark valley, through which you are now passing. This road became necessary after man's apostacy; and it is the kindness, not the anger, of your heavenly Father, that hath brought you into it. Had your destruction been pleasing to him, he would have suffered you to walk, without disturbance, in the broad way that leads to destruction: but by alarming your fears, he plainly intends to

prevent your ruin ; and the present taste he hath given you of the bitterness of sin, is graciously meant to divorce your hearts from the love of it, and to render the remedy which he offers more welcome and precious in your esteem.—For let it be observed, as a further ground of encouragement, that the gospel-call is particularly addressed to persons of this character: “ Come unto me,” says the blessed Jesus, “ all ye that labour “ and are heavy laden, and I will give you “ rest.” And herein he exactly fulfils the appointment of his Father, and acts in the most perfect conformity to the commission he received from him; of which we have a fair copy, *Isaiab lxi.*—at the beginning: “ The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, “ because the Lord hath anointed me to “ preach good tidings to the meek, he hath “ sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to “ proclaim liberty to the captives, and the “ opening of the prison to them that are “ bound.”——From this passage, it plainly appears, that humble convinced souls are his peculiar charge: he is the physician, not of the whole, but of the sick; not of those that justify

justify themselves, but of those who are perishing in their own apprehension, who feel their need of him, and know something of the worth of that salvation which he brings.

Let every humble sinner, then, take comfort from these considerations. God knoweth the penitent relentings of your hearts : Behold, he stands, like the father in the parable, stretching forth his arms to every prodigal son ! he registers all your groans, “ he putteth your tears into his bottle,” and, ere long, “ he will give you the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for your present spirit of heaviness.” In the mean time, let me recommend to you the following directions, with which I shall conclude.

Beware of smothering or quenching your convictions. I admit they are bitter, but they are also medicinal ; and, by the blessing of God, shall issue in that repentance unto salvation, which is not to be repented of : whereas, if you stifle them at present, your hearts may contract a hardness and insensibility, which, if ever it be cured at all shall cost you more pain and anguish than

you presently feel, or indeed can easily imagine.

At the same time, beware of drawing desperate conclusions against yourselves from the discoveries you have got of your guilt and danger. I may justly say to you, what the Apostle said in another case,—“ Mourn  
“ not like those who have no hope.” Your case, bad as it may seem, is certainly better than once it was. Formerly you were out of the way of mercy, now you have got into that very path where mercy meets the elect of God: It was then your sin to presume beyond any promise; beware now of despairing, against many commands; but amidst all your fears and anxieties, still endeavour to keep hope alive in your hearts.

Especially, hasten to the Saviour, who alone can give you rest. This is the great errand upon which convictions are sent; for, as I have already observed, “ the law is our  
“ schoolmaster to bring us to Christ,—who  
“ is the end of the law for righteousness to  
“ every one that believeth.”—Doth the Lord Jesus appear precious to your souls? do you see your absolute need of him, and his per-

fect suitability to your circumstances? O then, speedily have recourse to him, and receive him thankfully as the “unspeakable gift of God to men!” Embrace him cordially in all the important characters he sustains, as the Prophet, the Priest, and the King, of his church; and then shall you find, to your present comfort, and your everlasting joy, that he is both “able and willing to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God by him.” *Amen.*

S E R-

## S E R M O N VII.

MATTHEW xi. 28.

*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

**I**T was prophesied of our Lord long before his manifestation in the flesh, that he should “proclaim liberty to the captives, “and the opening of the prison to them “that are bound:” And lo! here he doth it in the kindest and most endearing manner, offering *rest*, or spiritual relief, to every *labouring and heavy laden* sinner.—*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

In discoursing from which words, I propose, in dependence upon divine aid,

*First*, To open the character of those to whom the invitation is addressed :

*Secondly*, To explain the invitation itself, and shew what is included in *coming*



to Christ: After which I shall endeavour, in the

*Third* place, To illustrate the gracious condescending promise with which our Lord enforces the call: *I will give you rest.*

I BEGIN with the character of those to whom the invitation is addressed. They are such, you see, as *labour and are heavy laden*; that is, who feel the unsupportable load of guilt, and the galling fetters of corrupt affections, and earnestly long to be delivered from both; for these were the persons whom our Saviour always regarded as the peculiar objects of his attention and care.—By our fatal apostacy, we forfeited at once our innocence and our happiness; we became doubly miserable, liable to the justice of God, and slaves to Satan and our own corruptions. But few, comparatively speaking, are sensible of this misery! The bulk of mankind are so hot in the pursuit of perishing trifles, that they can find no leisure seriously to examine their spiritual condition. These indeed have a load upon them, of weight more than sufficient to sink them

them

them into perdition ; but they are not *heavy laden* in the sense of my text. Our Saviour plainly speaks to those who feel their burden, and are groaning under it ; otherwise the promise of rest, or deliverance, could be no inducement to bring them to him. And the call is particularly addressed to such, for two obvious reasons :

*First*, Because our Lord knew well that none else would comply with it. “ The full soul loaths the honey-comb.” Such is the pride of our hearts, that each of us would wish to be a saviour to himself, and to purchase heaven by his own personal merit. This was the “ rock of offence” upon which the Jews stumbled and fell : they could not bear the thought of being indebted to the righteousness of another for pardon and acceptance with God ; for so the Apostle testifies concerning them, (*Rom. x. 3.*), “ Being ignorant of God’s righteousness, they went about to establish their own righteousness, and did not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God.” And still this method of justifying sinners is opposed and rejected by every “ natural man.”

“ man.” He feels not his disease, and therefore treats the physician with contempt and scorn: whereas the soul that is enlightened by the Spirit of God, and awakened to a sense of its guilt and pollution, lies prostrate before the mercy-seat, crying out with Paul when struck to the ground, “ Lord, “ what wilt thou have me to do?—It was therefore with peculiar significance, that our Lord introduced his sermon upon the mount, by adjudging the kingdom of heaven to the “ poor in spirit,” placing humility in the front of all the other graces, as being the entrance into a religious temper, the beginning of the divine life, the first step of the soul in its return to God.

2dly, The *labouring and heavy laden* are particularly distinguished; because otherwise, persons in that situation, hopeless of relief, might be in danger of excluding themselves from the offer of mercy. If there was only a general call to come to the Saviour, the humble convinced soul, pressed down with a sense of its guilt and depravity, might be ready to object, Surely it cannot be such a worthless and wicked creature as

I am, to whom the Lord directs his invitation. And therefore, he “who will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax,” doth kindly encourage them by this special address, that the very thing which to themselves would appear the greatest obstacle in the way of mercy, might become the means of assuring them, that they are the very persons for whom mercy is prepared.

Let this then encourage every weary self-condemning sinner: The greater your guilt appears in your own eye, the greater ground you have to expect relief if you apply for it. Mercy looks for nothing but an affecting sense of the need of mercy. Say not, If my burden were of a lesser weight, I might hope to be delivered from it; for no burden is too heavy for Omnipotence: he who is “mighty to save,” can easily remove the most oppressive load; “his blood cleanseth from all sin,” and “by him all who believe, are justified from all things.”—— This great physician did not come to heal some slight distempers, but to cure those inveterate plagues, which none besides himself

ſelf was able to cure. Whatever your diſeaſe be, it ſhall neither reproach his ſkill nor his power; and all that he requires on your part, is a ſubmiſſive temper to uſe the means he preſcribes, with a firm reliance upon their virtue and efficacy. If you are truly convinced, that your guilt is ſo great, and your corruptions ſo ſtrong, that none in heaven or on earth can ſave you from them but Chriſt alone; if you are groaning under the burden of ſin, and can find no reſt till pardoning mercy and ſanctifying grace bring you relief; then are you in the very poſture which my text deſcribes; and I may warrantably ſay unto you what Martha ſaid to Mary, “ Arife quickly, the “ Maſter is come, and calleth for thee.” And this is his call, *Come unto me*. Which is the

*Second* thing I propoſed to explain. Now, for underſtanding this, it will be neceſſary to remind you of the different characters which our Lord ſuſtains; or, in other words, the important offices which he executes as our Redeemer. Theſe, you know,  
are

are three, to wit, the offices of a Prophet, of a Priest, and of a King; in each of which the Lord Jesus must be distinctly regarded by every soul that comes to him. Accordingly, you may observe, that in this gracious invitation, he exhibits himself to our view in all these characters: for to the condescending offer of removing our guilt, he immediately annexes the command, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me."

Such is our misery by the fall, that we are not only become the objects of God's righteous displeasure, and liable to that awful punishment which was the penalty of the first covenant, but our nature is wholly diseased and corrupted; so that "in us, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing." Our understanding is darkened, filled with prejudices against the truth, and incapable of discerning spiritual objects: "For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Our will is stubborn and rebellious,

bellious, like “an iron sinew,” which no force can bend; so inflexible in its opposition to the divine law, that it is called in Scripture “enmity against God:” and all our affections are wild and ungovernable, deaf to the voice of reason and conscience, in perpetual discord among themselves, and wholly alienated from God, in whom alone they should unite and centre.—Such a Saviour, therefore, was necessary for our relief, as could effectually remedy all those evils, and not only redeem us from wrath, but likewise prepare us for happiness, by restoring our nature to that original perfection from which it had fallen.

For this end, our Lord Jesus Christ, that he might be in all respects furnished for his great undertaking, was solemnly invested by his heavenly Father with each of the important offices I have named; that our understanding being enlightened by his divine teaching, and our will subdued by his regal power, we might be capable of enjoying the fruits of that pardon, which, as our great High-priest, he hath purchased with his blood.—Now, in all these characters, the

Scriptures propose him to our faith; and we do not comply with the invitation in my text, unless we come to him for the proper work of each office, and embrace him in the full extent of his commission; that “of God  
“ he may be made unto us, wisdom, and  
“ righteousness, and sanctification, and re-  
“ demption.”

It is true, indeed, that the soul, in its first approach to Christ, doth principally regard him as a priest or a sacrifice; and therefore faith, as it is employed for justification, or pardon, is emphatically styled, *Faith in his blood*. To this God looks when he justifies the sinner; he views him as sprinkled with the blood of atonement: and therefore, to the same blood the sinner must necessarily look, upon his first application to Christ.—When the criminal under the law fled to the horns of the altar, he considered the temple rather as a place of protection than of worship.—The authority of a teacher, and the majesty of a king, are objects of terror to a self-condemning sinner, and by no means suit his present necessity. Christ, as suffering, and “bearing  
“ our



“ our sins in his own body on the tree,” is the only object that can yield him relief and comfort; for where shall he find the rest of his soul, but where God found the satisfaction of his justice?

Nevertheless, though Christ upon the cross be the first and most immediate object of faith, yet the believer doth not stop there; but having discovered a sufficient atonement for his guilt, he proceeds to contemplate the other characters of his Redeemer, and heartily approves of them all as perfectly adapted to all his necessities. He hearkens to his instruction, and cheerfully submits to his yoke, and covets nothing so much as to be taught and governed by him. The ingenuity of faith speaketh after this manner:—Seeing Christ is my Priest to expiate my guilt, it is but just and reasonable that he should be my Prophet to teach me, and my King to rule over me; that as I live by his merits, I should also walk by his law.

O blessed Jesus! faith the soul that comes to him, thou true and living way to the Father! I adore thy condescending grace,

in becoming a sacrifice and sin-offering for me: and now, encouraged by thy kind invitation, I flee to thee as my only city of refuge; I come to thee “wretched, and  
 “miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:”—I have no price to offer thee, no goodness at all to recommend me to thy favour: *labouring and heavy laden*, I cast myself at thy feet, and look to thy free mercy alone for the removal of this burden, which, without thy interposition, must sink me down to the lowest hell.—Abhorring myself in every view I can take, I embrace thee for my righteousness; sprinkled with thine atoning blood, I shall not fear the destroying angel:—Justice hath already had its triumph on thy cross; and therefore I take thy cross for my sanctuary.—This is my rest; and here will I stay, for I like it well.

Nor is this my only errand to thee, O thou complete Saviour!—I bring to thee a dark benighted mind to be illuminated with saving knowledge.—“Thou hast  
 “the words of eternal life;” “in thee are  
 “hid all the treasures of wisdom:” I there-  
 fore

fore resign my understanding to thy teaching; for “no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and those to whom the Son shall reveal him.”

I likewise choose thee for my Lord and my King; for thou “art altogether lovely,” and in every character necessary to my soul. — Here are enemies whom none can vanquish but thyself;—here are corruptions, which nothing less than all-conquering grace can subdue: I therefore implore thine almighty aid.—Do thou possess the throne in my heart, and cast out of it whatever opposeth or offendeth thee.—It is thine already by purchase;—O make it thine also by conquest! and perform the whole work of a Saviour upon it.

After this manner doth the believer address himself to Christ; and thus doth he answer the call to *come unto him*. From all which we may learn our duty in this matter. Let every *labouring and heavy laden* sinner, who hears me this day, speedily betake himself to the same happy course: plead his own call, and humbly claim his gracious protection; flee without delay to his

atonement blood, and cleave to him as the Lord your "righteousness, and your strength." —I shall afterwards represent to you those sure grounds of hope which may encourage you to do this: In the mean time, let us consider

The gracious promise with which our Lord enforces the invitation: *I will give you rest.* This was the

*Third* thing I proposed to illustrate.

There can be no doubt that the *rest* here spoken of, must be, at least, of equal extent with the *burthen*, and include a deliverance from every cause of trouble to the soul. But this subject is an ocean without bottom or shore; we cannot measure the length or breadth of it, neither can its depth be fathomed; for "the riches of Christ are unsearchable;" and surely no tongue can express what the mind itself is unable to comprehend. Nevertheless, I shall attempt to say a few things which may be of use to help forward your comfort and joy, till eternity shall unfold the whole to your view.

Doth

Doth the guilt of sin, and the curse of the law, lie heavy upon thy soul? “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” In the sacrifice of Christ there is an infinite merit that can never be exhausted. He hath satisfied the most extensive demands of justice, and purchased a full and everlasting indemnity to every penitent believing sinner: so that “now there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” No sooner doth a soul *come* to him in the manner I described, than it “passeth from death to life.” He spreads his righteousness over it, and, under that covering, presents it to his heavenly Father: from that happy moment it is no longer under the law, but under grace: “For Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, by his being made a curse for us.” — And what a plentiful source of consolation is this! Well may the sinner “be of good cheer,” to whom Christ hath said, “Thy sins are forgiven thee.”

Do you feel a law in your members warring against the law of your mind?

Are you harassed with temptations, and so environed with “a body of death,” that you are made to cry out, as Paul once did, “O wretched man, who shall deliver me!” Look up to that Prince and Saviour, whom God hath exalted, not only to give remission of sins, but likewise to bestow repentance upon his people, and grace to help them in every time of need. Christ hath obtained the Holy Spirit, by whose almighty aid the Christian can do all things. He will plant that immortal seed in your hearts, which shall gradually kill the weeds of corruption: so that, according to his faithful word of promise, though sin may lodge and fight within you, yet it shall not be able to get “dominion over you.”

Do you fear that some unforeseen cause may provoke him to forsake you, to withdraw his love, and the communications of his grace? Know that “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”—Christ is the “good shepherd, who carries the lambs in his bosom;” and therefore they cannot perish, because none is strong enough to pluck them out of his hand.

The

The believer is not left to stand by himself; he who is the author, is likewise the finisher of his people's faith. Omnipotence is their guardian; and they are "kept," not by their own strength, but "by the power of God, through faith unto salvation."

These three are surely the *heaviest burdens* with which the soul of man can be oppressed; and you see that the Lord Jesus is able to remove them all. — There are, no doubt, many other causes of discouragement to which we are liable, so long as we sojourn in this valley of tears; but as none of them are equal to those I have already named, we may certainly conclude, that he who performs the greater work, can, with infinite ease, perform the lesser also. And indeed, if I might stay upon this branch of the subject, it would be no difficult task to show, that in all other respects believers "are complete in Christ," and may by faith derive from him whatever is necessary either for their safety or comfort in this world: "For it hath pleased the Father, that in him  
" should

“ should all fulness dwell,” as it is written, *Coloss. i. 19.*

But if we would behold the *rest* here spoken of in its utmost extent, and highest perfection, we must look above us to that heavenly world, from which sin, and all the painful effects of it, are eternally excluded. “ There remaineth a rest,” said the Apostle, “ for the people of God.” Great and manifold are their privileges even in this world; but beyond all these, are still more glorious and enriching blessings that await them in the next, which our “ ears “ have not yet heard, neither can our hearts “ conceive.”—When we attempt to think of that exalted happiness, we can do little more than remove from it in our minds all those afflicting evils and grounds of discouragement which we presently feel: only we must conclude, that whatever the particular ingredients are, the happiness itself must be, in all respects, worthy of its glorious Author, and proportioned to the infinite price that was paid for it. Our Lord himself calls it a “ kingdom,” nay, a “ kingdom prepared from the foundation “ of



“ of the world ;” and the Apostle Peter hath recorded three of its distinguishing properties, (1 *Peter* i. 4.), where he styles it an “ inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and “ that fadeth not away.”

Such, my brethren, is that rest which Christ will finally bestow upon his people. They shall “ enter into the joy of their “ Lord.” All their burdens shall drop with their natural bodies ; none of them can pass beyond the grave. Then faith and hope shall become sight and enjoyment ; then love grown perfect shall cast out fear ; and nothing shall remain of all their former trials, but the grateful remembrance of that friendly hand which supported them, and hath at length crowned their “ light and momentary afflictions,” with a “ far more exceeding and eternal weight of “ glory.”

AND now, in the review of all that has been said, methinks every sinner who hears me should be ready to answer the call of my text in the language of Peter, “ Lord, “ to whom shall we go but unto thee ? “ for

“ for thou hast the words of eternal life.”  
—O that there were such hearts in us!  
—But perhaps some humble soul may say, Gladly would I go to this Saviour, willingly would I throw myself at his feet and implore his protection; but such, alas! is my vileness and unworthiness, so long have I slighted his offers and abused his grace, that I fear this call, kind as it is, doth not extend to me: my case is singularly bad, and my sins have been aggravated to such a degree, that my desponding heart hath already pronounced the sentence of condemnation; and the doom appears so just, so righteous, that I can see no ground to hope that ever it shall be reversed.—For removing this obstacle, which seems to lie in the way of your return to Christ, let me beg your attention to the following particulars.

Consider the great condescension of this Redeemer. While he was upon earth, he never rejected any who sought relief from him: like a sanctuary whose gates stand continually open, he gave free undebarr'd access to all, in so much that his enemies,  
by

by way of reproach, stiled him *the friend of publicans and sinners*.—Neither did our Lord disown the character: on the contrary, he gloried in it, and proclaimed it openly to the world; declaring, upon all proper occasions, that “ he was come to seek, and to save, that which was lost.” For this end, he assumed our nature; for this end, he suffered and died; and upon the same benevolent design, he is now gone up to heaven, “ where he appears “ in the presence of God for us;”—“ that “ if any man sin, he may have an Advocate with the Father,” to solicit his pardon, and to plead his cause.—And may not these discoveries of his merciful nature expel your fears, and revive your hope? Has he in a manner laid aside the majesty of a sovereign, and put on the mild and amiable aspect of a tender-hearted sympathizing friend? and may not this by itself encourage you to draw near to him, and to claim the blessings of that *rest* he hath obtained for his people?

But, lo, he hath prevented you even in this: for to all the proofs of his good-will

to men, he superadds the most warm and pressing invitations, to come to him for relief from all their burdens.—“ In the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, If *any man* thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.”—“ Behold,” said he to the degenerated church of the Laodiceans, “ Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If *any man* will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.” And in the concluding chapter of the Revelation, it is written, “ The Spirit and the bride say, Come: and let him that is a-thirst, come: and *whosoever will*, let him come, and take the water of life freely.”—So that you see my text is not a singular instance of condescension; the Scriptures are replenished with invitations of the same kind; and they are all expressed in the most extensive and absolute terms, on purpose, as it were, to obviate every possible objection, and to remove all jealousy from the most desponding sinners, who

who might otherwise have suspected that the call did not reach so far as them.

But lest the offer of a Saviour, when viewed as a privilege, might still appear in the eyes of some a privilege too high for them to aspire to, therefore it hath pleased the Father to interpose his authority, and to make it our duty to embrace the offer: as we learn from that remarkable passage, (1 *John* iii. 23.),—"This is the *command* of God, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ."—So that faith in Christ becomes an act of obedience; the law of the Supreme Governor is the sinner's warrant to come to the Saviour; and therefore it can be no presumption in any, however guilty they have been, to flee to this city of refuge, seeing he who hath appointed it, not only permits, but peremptorily *commands* them to repair to it.

And to crown all, our Lord himself hath declared in the most solemn manner, that none shall be rejected who come to him for salvation.—These are his words (*John* vi. 37.) "Him that cometh to me I will in no  
" wife

“ wife cast out.” I will receive him with out-stretched arms ; I will tenderly embrace and cherish him, and so unite him to myself, that the combined force of earth and hell shall never be able to dissolve the union, or to separate his soul from my unchangeable love.

Lift up thy head, then, O *labouring and heavy laden* sinner ! ponder, with due attention, those grounds of encouragement I have briefly suggested. Doth the Father *command* you to believe on his Son ? doth the Lord Jesus invite, nay intreat, you, to come to him, and at the same time assure you that “ he will in no wise “ cast you out ? ” and shall not this multiplied security remove all your doubts, and bring you to him with a humble, but stedfast, hope of obtaining that *rest* which he offers unto you ? — Say not henceforth, My burden is so heavy, and my guilt so great, that I dare not go to him ; but rather say, My burden is so heavy, that I *must* go to him ; for no other arm can remove it but his own. He offers you his help, because you are miserable ;

he

he invites you to come to him, not because you deserve, but because you need his aid. Arise then, O sinners! and obey his call: cast your burden upon him who is mighty to save; yield yourselves, without reserve, to this faithful Redeemer, to be justified by his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit; “take his yoke upon you, and learn of him;” and then you shall find *rest* to your souls.

But what shall I say to those who have never as yet felt the burden of sin? who, amidst the deepest poverty and wretchedness, imagine themselves to be “rich, and increased with goods, and to stand in need of nothing?”——Alas! my friends, what can we do for such?——Shall I denounce the curses of a broken covenant to alarm their fears?——Shall I publish the terrors of the Lord, and by these persuade them to flee from the wrath to come?——Indeed, considerations of this kind seem proper and necessary, to rouse them from that deadly sleep into which they are cast.——And believe it, O sinners! that no representations of this sort, however awful they

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might appear, could exceed, or even equal, the dreadful reality; “for who knoweth the “power of God’s anger?”

But as my text breathes nothing but love and clemency, I shall rather, upon this occasion, “beseech you by the meekness and “gentleness of Christ,” and fetch my arguments from the endearing condescensions of his mercy and grace.

Know then, O sinners! that, after all the contempt you have thrown upon him, he is still willing to become your Saviour. Ungrateful as you have been, he once more opens his arms, and invites you to come unto him.—He sends us forth this day, to call after you in his name, and to intreat you in his stead to be reconciled to God.—Behold, in the gospel-offer, he lays, as it were, his crucified body in your way, to stop you in your self-destroying course.—And will you still press onward, “and trample under foot the Son of God?” —Behold, his blood, like a mighty river, flows between you and the place of torment:—And will you force your passage to the everlasting burnings through  
this



this immense ocean of redeeming love?—  
 O sinners, think of this! all who perish under the gospel must carry this dreadful aggravation along with them, That mercy was in their offer, and they would not accept it; nay, that they insulted and abused the mercy that would have saved them.—  
 And “ can your hearts endure, or can your hands be strong, in the day that God shall deal with you” for this contempt? —For the Lord’s sake, open your eyes in time; look upon him whom you have pierced by your sins, and mourn.—I address you as the angels did Lot, when they brought him forth from Sodom; “ Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain:” Flee to the Saviour, “ lest thou be consumed.”

As for you who have already got within the walls of the city of refuge, I have one request to make to you, with which I shall conclude \*.——Come now and receive the new testament in Christ’s blood:

O 2

For

\* This, and the four Sermons that immediately follow, were preached at the celebration of our Lord’s Supper.

—For confirming your faith, and increasing your joy, he hath instituted this visible pledge of his love, this external seal of his gracious covenant; that, by the elements of bread and wine, the appointed symbols of his broken body and shed blood, he might invest his people with a full and unalterable right to all the blessed fruits of his sufferings and death.—And therefore, as you have come to Christ himself, you may lawfully consider the invitation in my text as your warrant and call to come to his table; and may hope to find, in this holy sacrament, something of that *rest*, or spiritual relief, which he is always ready to dispense to those who feel their need of it, and who know its worth. *Amen.*

## S E R M O N VIII.

## ZECHARIAH ix. 12.

*Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope ;  
even to-day do I declare, that I will render  
double unto thee.*

**I**N the 9th verse of this chapter, proclamation is made, that the Messiah is at hand ; and the church is called upon to go forth, and to meet him with joy. “ Re-  
joice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; shout,  
“ O daughter of Jerufalem : behold, thy  
“ King cometh unto thee.” And that the  
awe of his majesty might be no bar to their  
joy, they are told, for their encouragement,  
that he comes in such a form of conde-  
scension and grace, as serves rather to in-  
vite, than forbid their approach to him :  
For, “ He is just, and having salvation ;  
“ lowly, and riding upon an afs, and upon  
“ a colt, the sole of an afs.”—They are  
O 3 further

further, assured, in the 10th verse, that as the ensigns of his royalty differ so widely from those which earthly monarchs use, so he shall govern his subjects, and subdue his enemies, not by external force, but by inward persuasion; not by “the chariot, the horse, and the battle-bow;” for all these shall be “cut off;” but by the preaching of the gospel, accompanied with the powerful operation of his Spirit, which is emphatically called “speaking peace unto the Heathen:” in consequence whereof, “his dominion shall extend from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.” —And to finish the description of this King of Zion, it is added, in the 11th verse, that the gracious aim of his government is, to set men at liberty from the vilest slavery, and to release them from the most ignominious confinement, by opening their prison-doors, and “sending them forth out of the pit wherein is no water.” —This too he is to perform in a way peculiarly endearing: he is to purchase their freedom with the price of his own blood; which, with great propriety,

propriety, is styled “ the blood of the covenant,” as it ratifies and confirms that covenant of grace, whereby sinners are reinstated in the favour of God, and rescued from the power of all their spiritual enemies.

The like representation is given of the Messiah, *Isaiab* xlii. 6. 7. “ I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.” And the Messiah himself is introduced, *Isaiab* lxi. at the beginning, speaking to the same purpose, saying,—“ The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”

In all these passages, he is plainly pointed out to us in the character of a Redeemer;

and as such, he issues forth the proclamation in my text: *Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope; even to-day do I declare, that I will render double unto thee.*

In which words we have three things that deserve our notice.

*First*, A description of the persons whom he comes to redeem:—They are *prisoners of hope*.

*2dly*, The advice or command addressed to them:—*Turn ye to the strong hold.*  
And,

*3dly*, A gracious and encouraging promise:—*Even to day do I declare, that I will render double unto thee.*

I propose, God willing, to make a few remarks upon each of these particulars, and to conclude with an improvement suited to the occasion of our present meeting.

*First*, The persons to whom the command is addressed, are called *prisoners of hope*.

The description, you see, is of a mixed nature; it represents a state in the main bad, yet not so wholly bad as to be past recovery.

covery. We are all by nature in a state of bondage, condemned by the righteous sentence of the law, and slaves to Satan and our own corruptions. — By our apostasy from God, we sunk into a pit, where indeed “there is no water:”—There we sit “in darkness, and in the shadow of death,” destitute of every thing that can afford real peace and joy to the soul.—But though this pit doth not yield any water, yet water may be brought into it. The dew of divine grace may descend upon the prisoners, and “the day-spring from on high” may visit their dark abode, and guide them out of it into the way of peace and safety.—Hence unconverted sinners, though *prisoners*, may properly be called *prisoners of hope*, so long as their life is continued upon earth. — It is true, that if death surprize them in that state, they shall then sink lower into another pit; of which it may be said, with an awful emphasis, that *there*—“there is no water:”—it yields none;—it admits of none;—not one drop can be brought into it to cool the tongue.—But so long as they live, their case, though bad, is by no means hopeless;

hopeless; there is virtue enough in “the blood of the covenant” to save them; and though they are advanced to the last stage of impiety, yet even there Almighty grace can reach them, and snatch them like brands out of the burning.—So that under this general denomination of *prisoners of hope*, every man or woman living upon earth is spoken to in my text.—And indeed the gospel-call is addressed to sinners indefinitely:—“Unto you, O men, I call,” says the Saviour, “and my voice is to the sons of men.”—“Look unto me, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth.”—None are excluded from the offers of mercy: he invites all to come unto him; and “him who cometh, he will in no wise cast out.”

But more particularly, the description seems to point at those who feel their misery, and earnestly look and long for deliverance.—Many, alas! are lying in the pit of an unconverted state, without any sense or feeling of their woe; the darkness is so thick around them, that they see not the fetters by which they are bound.—

Now,



Now, such must necessarily put away from themselves every offer of liberty, saying, in the scornful language of the Pharisees, " We be Abraham's seed, and were never " in bondage to any man: how sayest thou " then, Ye shall be made free?"—I therefore reckon, that sensible sinners, humble convinced souls, are spoken to for their encouragement under this designation of *prisoners of hope*, not only to distinguish them from those who are gone to the pit where there is no hope; but even from others, who, though they still dwell in the land of hope, yet, in some respects, may be reputed in a hopeless condition; because their pride and insensibility put them out of the way of help and deliverance. Whereas they who have got an affecting view of their guilt and misery, lie, as it were, in the very road of mercy; nay, the more painful their feelings are, the greater likelihood there is of a gracious and speedy relief: He whose office it is " to bind up the broken-hearted, " and to proclaim liberty to the captives," will neither deny them his aid, nor defer their relief one moment beyond the time

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he knows to be best for them. And therefore sinners of this sort may, with peculiar propriety, be called *prisoners of hope*; because, whatever their own apprehensions are, Christ certainly looks upon them as his proper charge, and invites them to cast all their burdens upon himself, in these sweet condescending words, “Come unto me, all ye  
“ that labour and are heavy laden, and I  
“ will give you rest.”

By *prisoners of hope*, then, we may understand, more generally, all sinners, without exception, who are within the reach of divine mercy; and more especially those who are suing for mercy, under the felt burden of sin and misery.

But I add further, that even they who have obtained mercy, seem likewise to be included in the description of my text.—The connection of this with the preceding verse, leads me to this remark; and, I apprehend, lays a solid foundation for it; for the persons who are spoken *to* in this verse, are evidently the same who were spoken *of* in the preceding one; and yet here they are denominated *prisoners of hope*, though  
just

just before it was said of them, “ that by  
“ the blood of the covenant they were sent  
“ forth out of the pit wherein is no water ;”  
that is, cleansed from their guilt, and delivered from the darkness and misery of an unconverted state.

I need not observe to you, that the present condition of believers upon earth, is neither a state of perfect liberty, nor of uninterrupted peace. These are the blessed ingredients which constitute the happiness of the Zion above; but whilst they sojourn in this strange land, they are liable to various and painful distresses.—Even after they have received “ the Spirit of adoption,” they may feel such returns of the “ spirit of bondage,” as shall oblige them to cry out with David,—“ My spirit is overwhelm-  
“ ed within me:—Attend unto my cry, O  
“ God, for I am brought very low:—Bring  
“ my soul out of prison, that I may praise  
“ thy name.”

The remembrance of past guilt, the present feeling of indwelling corruption, the hidings of God’s face, and the assaults and buffetings of their spiritual enemies, are all

fo many different prifons, in which the deareft of God's children may be fhut up for a feafon. And we find fome of them recorded in holy writ, who, during the time of this fpiritual confinement, have felt fuch exquisite agony, that with difficulty they have been kept from razing the foundation, and quitting all hope.—Such was the cafe of Afaph when he thus expreffed himfelf in the 77th Pfalm: “ I remembered God, and  
 “ was troubled:—I am fo troubled, that I  
 “ cannot fpeak.—Will the Lord caft off for  
 “ ever? will he be favourable no more? Is  
 “ his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his  
 “ promife fail for evermore? Hath God for-  
 “ gotten to be gracious? hath he in anger  
 “ fhut up his tender mercies?”— And how diftreffing muft we fuppofe the cafe of He-  
 man to have been, when it drew from him fuch mournful complaints as thefe:—“ My  
 “ foul is full of trouble, and my life draw-  
 “ eth nigh unto the grave:—Thou haft laid  
 “ me in the loweft pit, in darknefs, in the  
 “ deeps:—Lord! why cafteft thou off my  
 “ foul? why hideft thou thy face from me?  
 “ I am afflicted, and ready to die from my  
 “ youth

“ youth up : while I suffer thy terrors, I am  
“ distracted ; thy fierce wrath goeth over  
“ me ; thy terrors have cut me off.”

These strong examples are sufficient to prove, that there are other prisons besides the pit of an unconverted state : Prisons where those who are near and dear to God, may, for wise and holy reasons, suffer a temporary confinement ; on account of which they may be justly denominated *prisoners of hope*.

And if so, then my text speaks directly to every soul in this assembly ; and the advice it gives to each of you is this :

*Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.* And this is the

*Second* branch of the subject, which I am now to consider.

By the *strong hold* to which we are exhorted to turn, is undoubtedly meant “ the blood of the covenant,” spoken of in the preceding verse ; or rather the new covenant itself, ratified and sealed by the blood of Christ.

This indeed is a *strong hold*, an impregnable

nable defence to all who flee to it for refuge: It is “an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.”—Here an effectual supply is to be found for all the sinner’s wants and necessities;—an infinite sacrifice to expiate his guilt;—all-conquering grace to subdue his corruptions;—unerring wisdom to guide him:—irresistible power to protect him;—unbounded goodness to relieve his present needs, and to crown him with glory and happiness hereafter.—In short, “the whole fulness of the Godhead” is treasured up in the Mediator of this covenant; and “he is made of God” unto all who believe on him, “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

But instead of enlarging upon the description of this *strong hold*, I reckon it of greater importance to explain the advice here given to the *prisoners of hope*, which is the proper work and duty of the day: *Turn ye to the strong hold.*—But how are we to do this?

1<sup>st</sup>, We must turn our back upon every thing else, and abandon all other means

of deliverance, as refuges of lies, which will miserably disappoint those who expect relief from them.—Particularly, we must renounce our own righteousness, and plead guilty in the presence of a holy God, acknowledging, that we stand justly condemned by the tenor of the first covenant, and are neither able of ourselves to give any satisfaction for past offences, nor to yield an acceptable obedience for the future.—“They  
“that be whole,” said our blessed Saviour,  
“need no physician, but they that are sick.”  
—The natural pride of our hearts opposeth our seeking aid from any thing without ourselves; nay, such is our disaffection to the great God, that even when aid appears necessary, we would rather be indebted for it to any other than to him.—I believe I may venture to affirm, that the gospel-sanctuary is always the sinner’s last resort; and it is not till we are “shut up unto the faith,” as the Apostle expresseth it, that is, hedged in on every side by an absolute despair of relief from any creature, that we come to think in good earnest of seeking it from Christ.—This then is the first thing im-

plied in *turning to the strong hold*, that we turn our back upon every thing else.— It further imports, in the

2d place, That we turn our eyes to this *strong hold*, and narrowly examine the security it affords.

The true flight of a soul to the Lord Jesus Christ, is not a rash and precipitate adventure, but the result of serious and mature deliberation: it is not curiosity, but pressing necessity, that sets the soul in motion. The awakened sinner sees the avenger of blood ready to seize upon him; and hearing of a *strong hold*, erected by infinite wisdom and grace, for the protection and safety of persons in his situation, he anxiously inquires into the truth of this report, and useth every means in his power to get certain information of it.

This, my brethren, is an essential part of the duty here enjoined. — I cannot tell you of what importance it is to get clear and distinct apprehensions of the gospel-covenant, that *strong hold* pointed out to us in my text.

We should not only endeavour to know  
what



what we are allowed to expect from it, but likewise to see the firmness of that foundation upon which our faith and hope must stand. — A wavering hope may balance a wavering apprehension of danger, but will not answer the necessities of an awakened sinner. But when we come to see that this *strong hold* is built upon the Rock of ages, and supported by pillars of invincible strength, even all the perfections of an unchangeable God;—or, to drop the allusion, when we see that this covenant, which promises every blessing we need, is a sure, a permanent, and irrevocable deed, confirmed by the oath of the great *I AM*, and sealed with the blood of his own dear Son, “in whom all the promises are yea and amen:” here the soul finds something to lean upon; its anxious fears begin to vanish; it now knows with certainty where relief is to be found.

Having thus discovered the stability of the covenant, and that it is in all respects such a *strong hold* as we need, the

3<sup>d</sup> and principal thing required is, That

we actually flee to it, and improve it for all the purposes for which it was intended.

The two former advices I gave you, were only preparatory to this last and most important step, which is the sum and substance of the duty here enjoined, *Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.*

You who are lying in the prison of an unconverted state, come hitherto this sanctuary, whose gates stand open to receive you: “It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners:” He hath shed that blood which “cleanseth from all sin,” and hath sealed that gracious and well-ordered covenant, which offers pardon and eternal life to every penitent believing sinner. — And now “all things are ready” for your reception and entertainment: The Father is ready to embrace you; Christ is ready to wash you in his blood; the Spirit is ready to heal your diseased natures; angels are ready to rejoice at your return; and we, as the servants of this King of Zion, are ready to welcome you into the family of God, and do now exhort and pray  
you,

you, in Christ's stead, "to flee for refuge, "to lay hold on the hope set before you." This is the call of my text to unconverted sinners.

As to the other *prisoners of hope* I spoke of, who, though they are rescued from the pit wherein is no water, yet find their souls cast down within them, and, by reason of various discouragements, cannot enjoy "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made "them free:"

The call to you is, *Turn again to the strong hold*, and once more look to "the Rock "that is higher than you."—The Redeemer in whom you trust, is mighty to save; "all "power is committed to him in heaven and "in earth;" and he is constituted "head "over all things for his church."—"It "hath pleased the Father, that in him all "fulness should dwell;" and the whole fulness of the Godhead is treasured up in him, for this very end, that he may dispense to his people such gracious supplies as their various cases and circumstances may require. Ye are not straitened in him, be not "straitened in your own bowels."

Might I stay to examine your particular complaints, I believe I could show you that there is something in the covenant to answer them all. He who brought you out of the pit of an unconverted state, can easily deliver you from every other prison. What furnace can consume those who are sprinkled with that blood which hath already quenched the fire of incensed justice? He who " bore your sins in his own body " upon the tree," will not suffer you to sink under the weight of them: He who " suffered, being tempted," will certainly succour you who are tempted:—He who, under the hidings of his Father's face, cried out upon the cross, " My God! my God! " why hast thou forsaken me?" cannot fail to sympathise with his people in the like circumstances;—and he whose own " soul " was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," will, in due time, communicate that joy to you, the want of which was so painful to himself. If Christ is indeed precious in your esteem; if you can say, without known guile, that your whole dependence is upon him, and him alone; then know, that he is

is

is equal to all the trust you can put in him, and he is faithful who hath said, — *Even to-day do I declare, that I will render double unto thee.* And this is the

*Third and last* branch of the text. Upon which I shall offer a very few remarks, and then conclude.

1st, I would observe, that the promise itself is most gracious, *I will render double unto thee.* We meet with the same expression, *Isaiab lxi. 7.* where I think the meaning of it is plainly ascertained: “For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.”——The chapter is introduced with that grand description of the Messiah’s office, which I formerly quoted:——“The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,” &c.——The redemption of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, and their return to their own land, appear from the sequel of the chapter to have been the events which the Prophet had more immediately in his

P 4

eye.

eye. But we shall not be able to doubt that he looked a great deal farther, even to that spiritual redemption which Christ was to atchieve for his church, if we turn over to the 4th chapter of *Luke*, 21st verse, where our blessed Lord, after reading this passage in the synagogue at Nazareth, made particular application of it to himself, in these remarkable words:—"This day is this  
" Scripture fulfilled in your ears."——  
Hence it is obvious, that what the Prophet says in the 7th verse, *viz.* for " your shame  
" ye shall have double," &c. falls to be understood in a spiritual sense too; and the meaning of it is, that the ransomed of the Lord shall not only be freed from bondage, and rescued from the hands of their spiritual enemies, but shall likewise be advanced to such honour and happiness, as shall wipe off all the shame of their servitude, and fill them with the most transporting joy.

In the 90th *Psalms*, at the 15th verse, Moses, the man of God, prays for the church in these terms: " Make us glad, according  
" to the days wherein thou hast afflicted  
" us, and the years wherein we have seen  
" grief."

“ grief.”—He only asks joy *in proportion* to the grief they had felt:—but the bounty of our gracious Lord doth far exceed the prayers and expectations of his servants; for here he says, I will render unto thee, not barely *according* to, or in proportion to thy former sufferings, but I will render *double* unto thee.—Even in this life, he may pour into your souls such measures of joy and consolation, as shall not only balance your past sorrows, but far outweigh them, and cause them to appear very light and inconsiderable.—At any rate, he will render unto you *double* in another world:—all tears shall there be wiped away from your eyes;—your light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are, in the mean time, working for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;—and, ere long, “ you shall return and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon your heads;—then shall you obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

I would further observe to you, in the  
2d place, That the comfort of this promise is greatly heightened by the manner  
of

of publishing it: *Even to-day do I declare.* It is uttered with great solemnity, and expressed in the most resolved and peremptory manner.—I do not say it flightly,—I *declare it*;—I pledge the credit both of my power and faithfulness, to make it good.

The circumstance of time too makes a remarkable addition.—I declare it *even to-day*;—in this dark and cloudy day, when your misgiving minds are meditating nothing but terror.—Even on *this day*, when the event is most unlikely, I give you the promise of complete deliverance;—*to-day*, when your hearts are emptied of self-confidence, when every other refuge fails, I give you my word, my oath, to lay hold upon;—and I do it *to-day*, whilst your feelings are most painful, that the depth of your distress may help you to form some conception of the high joy that awaits you at that happy time when *I shall render double unto thee.*

But I apprehend, there is still an emphasis in these words *to-day*, beyond any thing I have yet mentioned.—Here God, as it were, prefixes a date to his promise, which,  
in



in human obligations, has always been judged an essential formality:—as if he had said, Let it be recorded, that *on this day* I have passed my word for your salvation; for though I need no tokens to remind me of my everlasting purposes of grace,—yet as you need them to strengthen your faith and hope,—therefore, in pity of your weakness, I give you every kind of security you can ask from one another.—Let it then be remembered, that *to-day, I declare, I will render double unto thee.*

UPON the whole, then, let me once more repeat the call in my text, *Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.*—Bring all your cares, your doubts, your temptations, to that mighty Saviour, on whom your help is laid.—He hath declared to you, in his word, *that he will render unto you double*; “for what things soever  
“were written aforetime, were written  
“for our learning, that we, through pa-  
“tience and comfort of the Scriptures,  
“might have hope.”——The promise, though addressed to believers many ages ago,

ago, extends even to us; because he who made the promise is always “in one mind;”—“the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”—Nay, so great is his condescension, that he is just now willing to have it dated afresh under one of the authentic seals of his covenant.

Let us then, my brethren, humbly adore the goodness of God which hath provided so liberally for the relief and comfort of the *prisoners of hope*;—and in the entrance to the solemn service of this day, let us look up to him who is “the God of hope;” praying in the words which his own Spirit hath indited, that he would “fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” *Amen.*

S E R-

## S E R M O N IX.

I PETER, ii. 25.

*For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

**H**UMILITY is both the strength and beauty of the soul; it is its best defence, as well as its fairest ornament. "Happy is the man that feareth always; but he that hardeneth his heart, shall fall into mischief:"—"for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." No sooner had David said, "I shall never be moved," than he suddenly experienced a sad reverse of fortune, and found cause to utter that mournful complaint, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled."

Various means have been employed in every age of the church, to banish pride from the hearts of men, and to beget and cherish that lowliness of mind which becomes dependent guilty creatures. This

was

was the obvious tendency of the most solemn rites under the old dispensation. The annual sacrifice of the paschal lamb, besides its typical use, or reference to the great atonement, had likewise an important moral signification; and the lessons it taught were *humility* and *gratitude*. “It shall come to pass,” said Moses, by the command of God, “that when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.”—In like manner, when they brought the first fruits as an offering to the Lord, which was another solemnity that returned every year, the form of dedication was prescribed in these words, (*Deut. xxvi. 5, 6, &c.*) “A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid

“ laid upon us hard bondage. And when  
“ we cried unto the Lord God of our fa-  
“ thers, the Lord heard our voice, and  
“ looked on our affliction, and our labour,  
“ and our oppreffion. And the Lord  
“ brought us forth out of Egypt, with a  
“ mighty hand, and with an outfretch-  
“ ed arm, and with great terriblenefs,  
“ and with figns, and with wonders. And  
“ he hath brought us into this place, and  
“ hath given us this land, even a land  
“ that floweth with milk and honey. And  
“ now behold, I have brought the firft  
“ fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord,  
“ haft given me.”

Thus did God train up his ancient people  
“ to ferve him with reverence, and to re-  
“ joice before him with trembling.” Their  
thank-offerings, as well as their oblations  
for fin, obliged them to recognife the mean-  
nefs of their original, and the ignominious  
fervitude, from which God had redeemed  
them; and every act of worship taught them  
to fay, “ Who am I, O Lord God, and  
“ what is my houfe, that thou haft brought  
“ me hitherto?”

The ordinances of grace in the New-Testament church breathe the same spirit, and dictate the same language; nay, they do it with greater force and energy.

The gospel-passover, which we are this day to celebrate, commemorates a deliverance from spiritual thralldom; of which the release of the Jews from the Egyptian yoke, affords but a faint and imperfect emblem.

In those complicated sufferings which were the price of our redemption, we not only discover the unfearchable riches of divine love, but we likewise behold the full demerit of sin, and all the horrors of that misery into which we had plunged ourselves by our fatal apostasy: so that our triumph in the great salvation, by recalling to our minds the low and helpless state in which mercy found us, gives check to every self-exalting thought, and constrains us to ascribe to the free and unmerited favour of God, the sole, the undivided, praise of all that we have, or hope to enjoy.

To those views, and to this becoming  
exercise,

exercise, we are naturally led by the words of my text, which have frequently occurred to me as a most proper form of address for introducing communicants to the table of their Lord:—*Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned to the shepherd and bishop of your souls.*

These two widely different states,—What you *once were* by nature, and what you *now are* by grace,—I propose to illustrate in the sequel of this discourse; from both which we may, with ease and certainty, discover what frame and temper of heart best suit our attendance upon this great Christian solemnity.—Let me then call upon believers in Christ; for to them, and to them only, such language can be addressed: Let me call upon them, in the

*First* place, Seriously to review their former condition, when *they*, as well as others, *were as sheep going astray.*

The fitness of this similitude to exhibit the natural state of mankind, may justly be inferred from the frequent use that is made of it in the sacred writings.—I shall

nor attempt to trace out the resemblance in all its extent; but some parts of it are so striking and expressive, that to overlook them altogether, or even slightly to regard them, would either betray very gross insensibility, or a perverse contempt of the divine condescension.

Thus, a sheep that hath forsaken the good pasture, and strayed into the parched and barren wilderness, presents to us, in the strongest and most affecting light, an emblem of indigence, perplexity, and disappointment.—Now, such is the state of every natural man: “vanity and vexation of spirit,” are his portion; he resembles one “who dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty.” Disappointed in every pursuit, he goes from place to place, ever repeating the anxious question, *Who will show me any good?* There is a void within him that the world cannot fill; the flesh, after all the provision he can make for it, still cries with “the horseleech, Give, give;” and like “the fire or the grave, never saith, It is enough.” All the creatures



tures are to him, what the husks were to the prodigal; they yield a momentary relief, but no real nourishment: he endeavours to feed upon them; “but still he hath appetite, his soul is faint,” and he periseth with hunger.

Again, this figurative representation denotes a state of danger as well as of indigence and dissatisfaction. Few animals are beset with more enemies than sheep; and perhaps none are possessed of less cunning to elude, or of less courage to resist them. Their safety depends entirely upon the shepherd’s care: for if they wander beyond the reach of his protecting arm, they become at once, to every ravenous beast, not only a tempting, but an easy prey. With what awful precision doth this part of the similitude exhibit to us the state of unconverted sinners! Their spiritual enemies are both numerous and mighty; the subtilty of the serpent, and the strength of the lion, are but faint representations of their craft and power: yet such is the presumption of carnal men, so fatal the security of those who are far from God,

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that,

that, instead of avoiding their blood-thirsty foes, they roam without fear through their most frequented haunts, and rush headlong into those snares that are laid for their destruction.

Once more: Though sheep are not the only creatures that are prone to wander, yet it may justly be affirmed of them, that they, of all others, discover least sagacity in finding the way back to the place from whence they strayed; so that in them we likewise behold a proper and most descriptive emblem of man's helpless and impotent state by nature, and of his utter inability, by any efforts of his own, to regain his primeval happiness and glory.—That the Apostle intended to convey this idea, is more than probable, from the form of his expression in the latter part of the verse; where, speaking of the recovery of wandering sinners, he doth not say, *Ye have returned*, as if by their own sagacity they had discovered their error, and then rectified it by the activity of their own natural powers: but it deserves our notice, that he puts the word into the passive voice, *ye*  
*are*

are returned; that is, *converted*, or caused to return; as the same word is elsewhere rendered. For what our Lord said to his first disciples, may be addressed to believers in every age of the church: “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you:”—“It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure:”—“By grace we are saved, through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.” Nor can any words be conceived more absolute and decisive than these, which were uttered by Christ himself: “No man cometh unto me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him.”

In all these particulars, the resemblance can be traced with a critical exactness. But still there remains one other ingredient in man's apostasy from God, to which the similitude, comprehensive as it is, cannot be extended; the fatal ingredient I mean is *guilt*.

A sheep gone astray is an object of pity rather than of blame; the owner feels no emotion of anger against the simple wanderer;

derer; he doth not view it as faulty, but as unfortunate: he therefore seeks it with anxiety; and when he hath found it, so far is he from punishing it as a criminal, that he cherisheth it as a sufferer, takes it tenderly into his arms, and brings it home with joy. — Whereas, in our departure from God, every crime is united that can render us loathsome and odious in his sight. Man's apostasy was the effect, not of weakness, but of wilfulness: the guilt that lieth upon us is nothing less than proud and obstinate rebellion;—rebellion blackened with the vilest ingratitude;—unprovoked rebellion against the Father of our spirits, and the former of our bodies, the God in whom we live, the generous Author of those distinguished gifts, which, by the most impious abuse, we have turned into hostile weapons against himself.

Such monsters, my brethren, are all unconverted sinners. Happy! thrice happy they! of whom it can only be said, Such indeed ye *were*; “but ye are washed, ye  
“are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name  
“of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of  
“our

“our God.”—To you, O believers, my text is addressed: look back to the waste and howling wildernefs, “to the lions dens, “and the mountains of leopards,” where lately you wandered, “hungry and hard “bested,” furrounded with enemies, and unable to resist them.—Now, that you are established upon that Rock of ages, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail, it can surely do you no harm to cast your eye downward to the horrible pit, and the miry clay, where you were ready to perish, when mercy interposed, and brought you seasonable relief;—on the contrary, the remembrance of the dangers you have escaped, will heighten your gratitude, and only add solemnity to your present joy, while from the humbling review of what you *were* by nature, I lead you to the contemplation of what you *are* by grace. Which was the

*Second thing proposed in the method:—  
Ye are now returned unto the shepherd and  
bishop of your souls.*

The progress of a sinner in his return to

God was formerly described, when I opened the import of these kind invitations, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and  
“are heavy laden\* ;” and, “Turn ye to  
“the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope †.”  
—My present aim is, to comfort the souls of those who have already complied with the heavenly call, and to congratulate them upon the happy change that is wrought in their condition. Hail, ye blessed of the Lord !

Ye are returned to Him who came from heaven to earth, “to seek and to save  
“that which was lost ;” who, though infinitely offended by your criminal apostasy, hath himself made atonement for your past wanderings, and expiated your guilt with his own precious blood ; “He was wound-  
“ed for your transgressions, and bruised  
“for your iniquities, that by his stripes  
“ye might be healed.” “This is that  
“good shepherd, who laid down his life  
“for the sheep ;”—who “was made sin  
“for us, though he knew no sin, that we  
“might be made the righteousness of God  
“in

\* Serm. vii.

† Serm. viii.

“ in him ;”—who “ suffered, the just for  
“ the unjust, that he might bring us to  
“ God,” with filial boldness, in the humble,  
yet assured hope, that we shall “ obtain  
“ mercy, and find grace to help in every  
“ time of need.”

Ye are *returned* to Him,—who not only bore your griefs, and carried your sorrows, but hath likewise conquered all your enemies, and triumphed over them, as the chosen head and representative of his people. He hath in his own person “ spoiled principalities and powers ;” and his success is a pledge of your final victory over them. Annoy you they may, but they cannot hurt you ; by the blood of the Lamb you likewise shall overcome. Ere long “ the  
“ God of peace shall bruise Satan under  
“ your feet,” and put that new song into your mouth, “ Now is come salvation, and  
“ strength, and the kingdom of our God,  
“ and the power of his Christ ; for the ac-  
“ cuser of the brethren is cast down, who  
“ accused them before our God, day and  
“ night.”

Ye are *returned* to Him,—who will hence-  
forth

forth watch over you with peculiar care, and guard you as his property which he purchased with his blood. “ This *shepherd* “ of Israel, this *bishop*, this *overseer* of souls, “ never slumbers nor sleeps.”—Many seasonable, though unknown deliverances, did he work for you, even while you ungratefully despised and rejected him. Often did he pluck you out of the jaws of the bear and the lion, before you were acquainted with him, or had any thought of craving his protection: but now his eye is continually upon you, his ear is at all times open to your cry, his everlasting arms are around and underneath you; and therefore you may boldly say,—“ The Lord is my light, “ and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The “ Lord is the strength of my life, of whom “ shall I be afraid? Behold, God is my sal- “ vation; I will trust, and not be afraid: “ for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength “ and my song; he also is become my sal- “ vation.”

Ye are *returned* to Him,—who hath not only almighty power to guard you against danger, but infinite compassion likewise to  
 sympathise



sympathise with you in all your distresses, and to comfort you in all your sorrows.— He is meek and merciful, patient and condescending: “ He gathers the lambs with “ his arms, and carries them in his bosom, “ and gently leads those that are with “ young.” He pities their infirmities, and pardons their errors; he spares them when they are weary, and attends them when they are sick: nay, what no other shepherd can do, he imparts strength to the faint, and health to the diseased; and not only bestows food, but gives them an appetite to feed upon it: he also blesteth their provision, and causeth it to nourish them.

What shall I say more? This *shepherd and bishop of souls* continues to be their guardian even until death: neither doth he leave them at that awful period, but enters with them into the deep and darksome vale, supports them with “ his staff,” and so “ comforts them with the rod of his strength,” that they “ walk through it with dignity, “ and fear no evil, because he is with them.” Many of the saints have been remarkably honoured in this respect; even some, “ who  
“ through

“ through fear of death were all their life  
“ long subject to bondage,” have, in their  
latest moments, been enabled to triumph  
over this king of terrors, and to say with  
the Apostle Paul, “ O death, where is thy  
“ sting? O grave, where is thy victory?  
“ The sting of death is sin; and the strength  
“ of sin is the law. But thanks be unto  
“ God, who giveth us the victory, through  
“ Jesus Christ our Lord.” Or if to any of  
them these evening-shadows are so thick,  
that they cannot see the hand that supports  
them; yet this momentary gloom shall only  
serve to heighten their surprise, their gra-  
titude, and their joy, when at the farther  
end of the valley this good shepherd shall  
dispel the cloud, and stand before them re-  
vealed in all his glory;—when he shall em-  
brace them in his arms, and carry them  
upward to those greener pastures, and more  
fruitful fields of the heavenly Canaan;  
where, as it is beautifully expressed in the  
book of the *Revelations*, (chap. vii. at the  
close), “ they shall hunger no more, neither  
“ thirst any more, neither shall the sun light  
“ on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb  
“ which

“ which is in the midst of the throne, shall  
“ feed them, and shall lead them unto living  
“ fountains of water: and God shall wipe  
“ away all tears from their eyes.”

But I must not stay to enlarge upon these particulars; the imperfect account you have already heard, of the past and present state of believers in Christ,—what they *were* by nature, and what they *are* by grace,—may suffice to direct us to that frame and temper of heart, with which we ought to approach the table of the Lord.—And it is obvious, in the

*Ist* place, That we should do it with the deepest humility.—This is the garb that fits most gracefully, and suits us best, whether we consider ourselves as lapsed, or restored; as sinners, or as saints.—Are we pardoned? once we were condemned.—Are we sanctified? once we were impure.—Are we found? once we were lost.—Are we made alive? lately we were dead; and still we live by an act of grace; it was God who quickened us, and not we ourselves: he only maketh us to differ; neither have we any thing but what we received

ceived from him. Surely, then, pride was not made for man.

*2dly*, We should perform this service with the warmest emotions of gratitude and love:—giving thanks to the Father, who spared not his own Son, but delivered him to be a sacrifice and sin-offering for us: giving thanks to the Son, who spared not himself, but having taken upon him the form of a servant, submitted to hunger and thirst, to watching and weariness, to ignominy and torture; nay, to death and the grave; that through the merit of his death we might live for ever:—giving thanks to the Spirit of all grace, who unites us to Christ, and applies to our souls that redemption he hath purchased, who renews our depraved natures, and renders us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. How well doth that hymn of praise become the remembrance of Christ's death, with which the heavenly hosts celebrated the tidings of his birth? “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men.”

*3dly*, Godly sorrow for past offences, and holy purposes to offend no more, should likewise

likewise attend us to the table of the Lord. Is Christ there set forth as crucified before our eyes! and can we “look upon him” “whom we have pierced,” without mourning for those sins which were the cause of his sufferings? or can we mourn for them, without hating them, and resolving to forsake them?—Should not this be the language of every sincere communicant? “What have I to do any more with idols?”—“What I know not, Lord, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more.” But then, in the

*4th* place, These purposes must ever be accompanied with a sense of our own weakness, and of our absolute need of aid from above. Even after we are returned to the *bishop of our souls*, if left to ourselves we should quickly stumble and fall; the same hand that brought us back, when we were as *sheep going astray*, will always be necessary to uphold us in our journey, and to lead us forward till we arrive at the promised land. “Without me,” said our Lord, even to those who were united to him, as the branches are to the vine, “without me,” or separated

parated from me, " ye can do nothing: as  
" the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, ex-  
" cept it abide in the vine; no more can  
" ye, except ye abide in me." What is un-  
dertaken in self-confidence, shall certainly  
issue in shame and disappointment. The  
Apostle Peter, who boasted, that " though  
" all should forsake his Master, yet would  
" not he," not only forsook him, but with  
oaths and imprecations denied that he knew  
him. " He that trusteth to his own heart  
" is a fool:" ——" Behold," said the Pro-  
phet Habakkuk, " his soul which is lifted  
" up, is not upright in him." Needful,  
then, most needful, is that caution, " Let  
" him who thinketh he standeth, take heed  
" lest he fall." At the same time, in the

*5th* place, This diffidence of ourselves  
ought always to be qualified with a sted-  
fast trust, an unsuspecting confidence, in  
the power and faithfulness of our great Re-  
deemer. Paul, who disclaimed the ability  
of conceiving so much as one good thought,  
independent of God, did not however he-  
sitate to say, " I can do all things through  
" Christ that strengtheneth me." The same  
good

good shepherd who found us when we were lost, is able to “lead us in the paths of righteoufness;” and he will do it, “for his name’s sake.” He upon whom our help is laid, is styled “the faithful and the true witness:” And these are his kind encouraging words to all who are returned to him as the *bishop of their souls*: “My grace is sufficient for thee:”—“Fear 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 righteoufness.”

Such, my brethren, is that temper of heart with which we ought to attend upon this great Christian solemnity: The deepest humility, and the warmest gratitude; godly sorrow on account of our wanderings in time past, and holy purposes to walk circumspectly for the time to come; a sense of our weakness, and of our absolute need of grace from on high, joined with a firm unsuspecting reliance on the power and faithfulness of our glorious Redeemer, who hath promised the Spirit to them that ask

it, and bids us “ask, and receive, that our joy may be full.”—Thus let us encompass the altar of God, praying that this gospel-feast may prove effectual, through his blessing, for confirming our faith, for inflaming our love, and enlivening our hope;—that, by the nourishment it affords, we may be strengthened to pursue our journey through this wilderness, till, having passed the dark valley and shadow of death, we shall enter into the promised land of rest, where, face to face, we shall behold the *shepherd and bishop of our souls*, and, surrounding the throne of God and of the Lamb, bear our part in that grateful triumphant song, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.” *Amen.*



## S E R M O N X.

HEBREWS iv. 16.

*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

**T**HE great atonement we are this day to commemorate, is the sole foundation of that *throne of grace* to which the Apostle invites us in my text; for it is only “in Christ Jesus, that God reconcileth the world unto himself.” So that the subject I have chosen hath an obvious and peculiar reference to that sacred service in which we are shortly to be engaged.—In order to render it profitable for our instruction and comfort, I propose, in dependence upon divine aid,

*First*, To explain what is meant by *coming boldly unto the throne of grace*; and,

*Secondly*, To consider the errand upon which we are invited to come; namely, *that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to*

*help in time of need.* After which, I shall, in the

*Third* place, Illustrate the motives, or grounds of encouragement, suggested by the Apostle in the foregoing context, upon which the exhortation appears to be founded :

And then direct you to the practical improvement of the whole.

I begin with explaining what is meant by *coming boldly unto the throne of grace.*

You will easily perceive, that the *boldness* here recommended, must be something entirely different from fearless presumption, or headlong irreverence, in our approaches to God ; for he hath expressly said, and confirmed the truth of it by many awful examples, “ I will be sanctified in them  
“ that come nigh me, and before all the  
“ people I will be glorified.”——“ God is  
“ greatly to be feared in the assembly of  
“ the saints ; he is to be had in reverence  
“ of all that are about him.” We find this same Apostle, towards the close of the epistle, concluding a most lofty and anima-  
ted

ted description of the dignity and privileges of the gospel-church, with this remarkable inference, “ Wherefore, we receiving a  
 “ kingdom which cannot be moved, let us  
 “ have grace, whereby we may serve God  
 “ acceptably, with *reverence and godly fear* ;  
 “ for our God is a consuming fire.” Nay, the latter part of my text is sufficient to qualify the expression, and to guard us against any mistake about its true meaning and import. In what character must we approach the throne of grace? Is it not as creatures that *need both mercy and grace*?— If so, then surely the *boldness* with which we are exhorted to come, can be no other than the *boldness* of humble penitents; such as may consist with a conviction of guilt, and a sense of weakness; a *boldness* that takes its rise, not from any supposed goodness or worthiness in ourselves, but from the highest and most honourable conceptions of the greatness, as well as of the clemency, of that God whom we adore.

It is not then to filial awe and reverence, but to distrust and jealousy, that *boldness* is here opposed. The spirit becoming the

gospel-state is not a spirit of bondage and fear, but a spirit of adoption, disposing and enabling us to “cry, Abba, Father.” In this temper we should approach *the throne of grace*; not with terror and amazement, like criminals dragged before a tribunal of justice; but with a cheerful hope of obtaining pardon and acceptance, for the sake of him “who died for our sins, and “rose again for our justification;”—“who “suffered, the just for the unjust, that he “might bring us to God.”

Man’s apostasy began with harsh and injurious thoughts of God: seduced by the tempter, he suspected his Creator both of falsehood and envy: — And it is the office of faith to repair that injury, by recognising his title to the entire and unre-served trust of the creature. It was for this end that “God, being willing more “abundantly to shew to the heirs of pro-  
 “mise, the immutability of his counsel,  
 “confirmed it by an oath; that by two  
 “immutable things, in which it was im-  
 “possible for God to lie, they might have  
 “a strong consolation, who have fled for  
 “refuge

“ refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them.” It is his pleasure, that we rely upon him with an unsuspecting confidence; and we then honour him most, when, conscious of our own unworthiness, but depending at the same time upon his faithful word of promise; satisfied with the proofs he hath given us of his love, and encouraged by his kind and generous invitation; we come to his throne with a child-like freedom, to pour out our hearts before him, and to present our supplications for that mercy and grace, which he is always ready to bestow upon those who feel their need of such important blessings.—But the full meaning and import of the exhortation will better appear, when I have opened the errand upon which we are invited to *come boldly unto the throne of grace.*—Which was the

*Second* thing proposed in the method.—The errand, you see, consists of two parts.

The *first* in order is, *that we may obtain mercy*;—mercy to pardon our sins, and

to reinstate us in the favour and friendship of God.—This blessing is introductory to all others; for till we are reconciled to God through the great Mediator, we are incapable of holding communion with him; neither can we yield unto him any service that is acceptable:—“Two cannot walk together, except they be agreed;”—and till *the blood of Jesus, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot unto God, purge our conscience from dead works, we cannot serve the living God*: for “they that are in the flesh, cannot please God.” Nay, after we are justified and accepted in the Beloved, though we are thereby secured against final condemnation, yet we are not raised above the need of pardoning mercy: still we shall have this errand *to the throne of grace*; our repeated backslidings will always render it necessary to make repeated application to the blood of the covenant, for cleansing us afresh, and obtaining renewed intimations of pardon and acceptance.

But we have another errand besides this

to

to the throne of grace;—namely, that we may find grace to help in time of need. The form of expression implies, that there is no danger of a disappointment: assisting grace is already prepared; it waits our coming; and if we seek, we shall certainly find it.—It farther seems to intimate, that we should be habitually in a posture of waiting upon God, according to that apostolic injunction, “Pray without ceasing;” for such is our weak distempered state, that there is no portion of time in the whole duration of our life upon earth, which is not to us a *time of need*: should God withdraw his help for one moment, in that very moment we should stumble and fall.

One thing deserves our particular attention; namely, That the grace we are encouraged to ask, is grace for *present need*, and not present grace for *future supposed necessities*. This remark is of greater importance than is generally apprehended. It is no uncommon thing for serious people, who suspect their own sincerity, to forecast some trial of the severest kind, and to pass judgement upon themselves, according

according to the present state and temper of their minds with respect to that supposed trial.—What shall I think of myself? faith one: it is required of a disciple of Jesus, that he take up his cross;—but so feeble am I, that my nature shrinks at the remotest prospect of suffering: should persecution arise for righteousness sake, I should not be able to stand in that evil day; I should sink under the cross, and “make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.”—Alas! faith another, instead of “desiring to depart, and to be with Christ,” Death is to me the “king of terrors;”—when I think of dissolution, my heart dies within me; what shall I do when the fatal period is come?—Were I in Christ Jesus, surely it could not be thus with me: have I not then cause to conclude that my religion is vain?—By such unwarrantable experiments do many perplex and discourage their souls, and weaken their hands for present duty. I call them *unwarrantable experiments*, because they are not only beside the scripture-rule, but directly contrary to it. Our  
Lord



Lord hath commanded us, “to take no  
“thought for the morrow, but leave the  
“morrow to take thought for the things  
“of itself; because sufficient unto the day  
“is the evil thereof.” When he fore-  
warned his disciples, that they were to be  
brought before governors and kings for  
his sake, did he require them to tell, at  
that very instant, what defence they could  
make? or did he even set them upon pre-  
paring answers to such questions as might  
be put to them? No: on the contrary, he  
said unto them, “Be not anxious how, or  
“what ye shall speak; for it shall be given  
“you in that same hour what ye shall  
“speak.” When ye are brought to the  
trial and work of confessors, then shall you  
find the courage and wisdom of confessors.  
—So it is, my brethren, with respect to  
us: grace to suffer, is for a suffering sea-  
son: grace to die, is for dying moments:  
then, but not before, is the *time of need*.  
Are you solicitous about *grace* for future  
emergencies? let me ask you, I pray, have  
you got all the *grace* you need for present  
duty? — If you think you have, I can,  
without

without further inquiry, assure you, that you are mistaken. — At this very moment you need grace to cure your anxiety and distrust, to check your impatience and presumptuous curiosity. Cast your care upon God for every needful support, when you shall be called to suffer and die, and come to his throne for grace that may enable you to live to some good and useful purpose in the mean time. Seek grace to mortify your remaining corruptions, to strengthen your faith, and to inflame your love: seek grace to perform all the duties of social life, to make you good neighbours, — good friends, — good parents, — or good children, — that you may serve and glorify God in those stations and conditions of life which his providence hath allotted you. These ought to be the immediate objects of your care: for till the present time cease to be a *time of need*, it is indecent, it is foolish, to look beyond it, and to distress yourselves with a premature anxiety about the morrow. — Our errand, then, to *the throne of grace*, is no other than this, to obtain mercy for the pardon of past sins,

ins, and grace proportioned to our present necessity ; either to subdue our corruptions, to resist temptations, to support us under the afflictions we feel, or to strengthen us for the duties we are called to perform.— I now proceed, in the

*Third* place, To illustrate the grounds of encouragement upon which the Apostle's exhortation is founded. These are suggested in the two preceding verses : *We have a great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God.*— This High Priest *is passed into the heavens ; and he is not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

The *1st* thing to be considered is the personal worth and dignity of our High Priest. Of this we have a lofty description in the beginning of the epistle : there he is styled the *Son of God*, and the *Creator of the worlds*, the *brightness of the Father's glory*, and the *express image of his person*, who *upholdeth all things by the word of his power ;* infinitely higher than the *angels*, inasmuch

as he is their *Lord* and head, and they only *ministering spirits*, whom he employs as his servants, and *sends forth to minister unto the heirs of salvation*. Thus great is the Christian's High Priest: this is that exalted Person who hath undertaken to mediate between God and sinners. Have we not here then one solid ground of encouragement, a firm foundation for our hope of the divine favour and acceptance?—— But this ground of encouragement receives a mighty addition, when, together with the personal dignity of our High Priest, we consider, in the

2d place, The value of what he did and suffered in that character. Having assumed our nature, “and taken upon him the “form of a servant,” he yielded a perfect obedience to that law which we had broken, and at last submitted to a painful, ignominious, and accursed death, that we might live through him. “He was made sin for “us, who knew no sin, that we might be “made the righteousness of God in him.” Hereby the law was magnified, divine justice infinitely glorified, and a way opened for

for the free and honourable exercise of mercy and grace, to a guilty world. The sufferings of the Son of God in our nature, and for our sins, afford a display of the divine holiness and justice, more bright and awful than if the whole human race had perished irrecoverably. While the law is not made void, but established, by what he *did*; at the same time, by what he *suffered*, a public testimony is given to all intelligent creatures, that sin is an evil of such deep malignity, that nothing less than a sacrifice of infinite worth could expiate the guilt of it, or save the transgressors from endless misery: So that this dispensation, which provides so effectually for the glory of God, hath a powerful tendency to quiet our minds, and to cherish our hopes of pardon and acceptance; because now it appears, that God may be merciful without impairing the authority of his government; nay, perfectly just, as well as infinitely gracious, when he justifieth those who believe on Jesus.— These hopes will appear to have a firmer foundation, if, to the dignity of our High Priest,

Priest, and the inestimable worth of his obedience and sufferings, we add, in the

3<sup>d</sup> place, That he was fully authorized to undertake this office: for, as we read in this same epistle, “Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest; but he who said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee.” Indeed, without such a divine constitution, the sacrifice he offered could have been of no benefit to us: The acceptance of one life in the place of another, dependeth solely upon him to whom the forfeiture is made. But blessed be God, the designation of our Lord to the office of High Priest, is so plainly and repeatedly asserted in Scripture, that there is no room left us to doubt of it. “He gave himself for our sins, according to the will of God.” Hence he is styled the *Messenger of the covenant*, the *Servant*, and the *elect of God*. In every part of his undertaking he acted by commission from his heavenly Father: “He came not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him;” which affords the strongest encouragement to draw near to God with filial

filial boldness, and to hope for acceptance through this great High Priest of his own designation and choice, this “mighty One, upon whom he hath laid our help.”  
Yea,

*4thly*, To remove every possible ground of jealousy, God hath testified, in the most public and solemn manner, his perfect satisfaction with his whole conduct as Mediator; which is a circumstance of the utmost importance, to give our hope a firm and lasting foundation. Though Christ had died on purpose to expiate our guilt, and to reconcile us to God; though his sacrifice had been of infinite worth in itself, and offered in consequence of his Father’s appointment; yet, after all, something would have appeared wanting to assure our faith, if we had not been furnished with the strongest evidence, that this sacrifice was really accepted. But, thanks be unto God, the certainty of this is put beyond all question in the sacred Scriptures. Twice was it proclaimed by an audible voice from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The miracles wrought

at his death, and that greatest of miracles, his own resurrection from the dead, are further confirmations of this comfortable truth. But, above all, his ascension into heaven, and his exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty on high, remove every conceivable cause of fear, and do well support that triumphant challenge of the Apostle, “ Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Which brings me to the

*5th* and *last* ground of encouragement, namely, That our great High Priest, who is passed into the heavens, is ever mindful of our interest, and lives and reigns for the benefit of his people. We are told in Scripture, that the legal High Priest carried the names of the twelve tribes on his shoulder and breast-plate, when, on the great day of atonement, he made his solemn entrance into the Holy of Holies; that while God  
looked



looked upon him, he might at the same time remember the tribes of Israel, accept his offering for the expiation of their guilt, and hearken to his prayers and intercession on their behalf. In like manner, our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is gone into the heavenly sanctuary, “ appears “ in the immediate presence of God for us,” sustaining the character of the second Adam, the head and representative of all his spiritual seed; and is raised to the highest dignity and power, that he may manage their affairs to the best advantage, and effectually secure their eternal salvation. He was a sufferer himself, and knoweth the heart of a sufferer, not by report, but by personal experience: he was tried with temptations even as we are; and though he conquered them all, yet he had proof of the skill, as well as of the malice of the tempter, and can make allowance for the disproportion betwixt himself and us. Nay, he stooped thus low, not only to make atonement for our guilt, and to open for us a passage to the mercy-seat; but that we, being assured of his perfect acquaintance with human infirmity,

firmity, might have the most cheerful reliance upon his compassion and sympathy, and *boldly* approach *the throne of grace*, having such a friend to patronize us, and to plead our cause: “ For we have not an  
 “ High Priest who cannot be touched with  
 “ the feeling of our infirmities; but was in  
 “ all points tempted like as we are, yet with-  
 “ out sin.”

By such encouraging motives, my brethren, doth the Apostle press the exhortation in my text: “ We have a great High  
 “ Priest, Jesus the Son of God,”—who offered up a sacrifice of infinite worth;—not officiously or at random, but by the express appointment of his heavenly Father, and in consequence of a solemn agreement or covenant.—This sacrifice was accepted for all the purposes for which it was intended;—in testimony whereof, our great High Priest hath “ passed into the heavens,” where, amidst all the splendors of his exalted state, he kindly remembers his people upon earth, feels their infirmities, sympathises with them in all their sufferings, and never ceaseth to make intercession for them.—Have we not  
 then

*then reason to come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need?*

BUT, after all, it must be confessed, that in this, as in most other things, the knowledge of our duty is far easier than the practice of it.

“Christ’s flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed;” but our Lord hath assured us, “that except we eat his flesh, and drink his blood, we have no life in us.” A speculative knowledge will avail us nothing; a Saviour unapplied can be no Saviour to us. To think justly of Christ, and of the great things he hath already done, and continues to do, for sinners of mankind, is an attainment of no great difficulty; but to improve his mediation as the source of our joy, and the means of our comfortable access to God, requires greater skill than many who profess to believe on him are possessed of. This wisdom cometh only from above. Nevertheless, as God usually worketh by the ministry of the word, before I conclude this discourse, I

shall endeavour to suggest a few hints that may be of use to you.

Are you overwhelmed with the glory and majesty of God? Are you ready to say, as Elihu did, "Behold! God is great, and we know him not?"—Turn your eyes to the "Word made flesh," and see the divine glory veiled in the human nature of your Redeemer. We can have positive conceptions of Jesus Christ; and though we may not think that the Godhead is flesh, yet we may think of it as it appeared in flesh, and shone forth in its holiness and goodness to the world. In the person of our Mediator, God approacheth us familiarly, to invite us to come to him with humble confidence, and reverend boldness. Christ did not assume a form of terror; women durst talk with him, sinners durst eat with him, the poor and the diseased durst ask his help: And though we must not debase the *dignity* of the Son of God, by imagining that it is as much obscured in heaven as it was upon earth; yet even the glorified humanity of *the Word made flesh*, affords unspeakable comfort to the soul, that might otherwise shrink

shrink back, and tremble to draw near to God.

Doth the guilt of sin terrify you? Do you fear that a just and holy God can never accept such offenders as you have been? Here Christ is our relief; who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; who paid our debt, and hath purchased and sealed our pardon with his blood. The curse and condemning sentence of the law are indeed terrible; but if we have truly fled to Christ for refuge, he hath nailed them to his cross, and will give us a full and free discharge.

Are you discouraged with the infirmities you daily feel, the imperfection of your knowledge, the wandering of your thoughts, the coldness of your love, and the feebleness of your desires?—Faith can still find a remedy in Christ Jesus, by reminding us, that our acceptance with the Father is thro' the merits of his Son:—and he, my friends, is worthy, though we are unworthy; his righteousness is perfect and without spot: he is not weak when we are weak; he is not distempered when we are sick: our High

Priest is unchangeable, “ the same yesterday, “ to-day, and for ever.”

Are you harassed with temptations, those fiery darts of the wicked one? Still faith can find a Saviour suited to your necessity. Our great Lord submitted, not only to be tempted by Satan, but to be tempted in a wilderness, where he had none to comfort him; nay, tempted to the most horrid blasphemy and wickedness, even to fall down and worship the devil himself. Look, therefore, to him “ who is touched with the feeling of your infirmities, having been in all “ points tempted even as you are.” He who made all temptations subservient to the triumphs of his own patience and conquering power, will support and succour his tempted servants, and make his grace victorious in the weakest hearts.

It sometimes happens, that the soul is oppressed with griefs and fears, which it cannot account for. Such was the Psalmist's case when he said, “ I remembered God, “ and was troubled; I complained, and “ my spirit was overwhelmed: O my God, “ my soul is cast down in me; I am so  
“ troubled,

“troubled, that I cannot speak.” But even in this case, faith can look to Christ, and remember, that he too was in an agony; an agony more painful than any thing we can feel; and yet, in that agony, he prayed more earnestly.—Faith will recollect the very words he uttered, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.—Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?*—It will remind us how he cried upon the cross, *My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?* though even then he was still the beloved of the Father; and suffered all this, that we might not be finally abandoned and forsaken.

After this manner may we improve the mediation of Christ for bringing us, in all the variety of our circumstances, with humble *boldness to the throne of grace*; where, to our present comfort, and our everlasting joy, *we shall obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in every season of need.* Amen.

## S E R M O N XI.

ROMANS viii. 32.

*He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

**S**O bright and luminous are the principles of heavenly wisdom, that, like the sun, they are seen by their own light, and may rather be said to impart themselves to us, than to be discovered by us. With regard to eternal things, the learned have no advantages above the unlearned: neither the gifts of nature, nor the improvements of art, confer any precedency in the school of Christ. The comfort of a Christian doth not depend upon a process of abstract reasoning; but results immediately from the knowledge and belief of interesting facts, attested by God, and faithfully recorded in the scriptures  
of



of truth: for as it is the will of God, that all the " heirs of promise" should have " a strong consolation," therefore the grounds of their consolation are brought to the level of the weakest capacity, that all his children may have equal access to them, and feed like brethren at one common table. Accordingly, you may observe, that, in the passage I have now read to you, the Apostle only reminds us of what God hath already done for sinners of mankind; *He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all:* And instead of reasoning in form, as if the import of this fact were dark or ambiguous, he takes it for granted, that the most simple and illiterate will perceive it at once; and gives a defiance to ignorance, that may distrust itself, either to pervert its meaning, or to draw from it any other conclusion, than what he himself doth; *How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*—My present design is, in dependence upon divine aid,

*First,* To illustrate this great foundation of the Christian's hope, *God spared not his*

*own Son, but delivered him up for us all;*  
and then to show, in the

*Second* place, That the gift which God hath already bestowed upon finners of mankind, affords every sincere believer the most absolute certainty, that nothing shall be with-held from him that is necessary to make him happy.

I begin with the great foundation of the Christian's hope, which is both the subject of my text, and the object presented to us in the holy sacrament of the supper: *God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.*

Amazing words! — The *God* in whom we live and move,—the Father of our spirits, [and the former of our bodies;—who possessed an eternity of happiness and glory before we began to exist, and can neither be enriched by our services, nor impoverished by the want of them:—*He* whose goodness we had abused by the vilest ingratitude; whose omnipotence we had defied by the most insolent rebellion;—even *that God* who “spared not the angels that sinned,  
“ but

“ but hath reserved them in everlasting  
“ chains, under darknes, to the judgement of  
“ the great day,”—vouchsafed to pity and to  
*spare* the children of men:—Nay, to make  
way for the exercise of this distinguishing  
mercy, *he spared not his own Son*, the Lord  
of angels, the Creator of the worlds; but,  
having substituted him in our place, clothed  
him with our nature, and “ laid upon him  
“ the iniquities of us all,” he *delivered him*  
*up* to contempt and persecution, to agony  
and torture, to death and the grave:—and  
all this for our benefit, to redeem us from  
everlasting misery, and to reinstate us in  
that happiness and glory we had forfeited.  
These are the marvellous doings of the  
Lord, which the Apostle here celebrates with  
gratitude and wonder, as the grounds of our  
faith, and hope, and joy.

But that our thoughts may not wander  
in too wide a field, let us at present confine  
them to the following particulars: *First*,  
The dignity of the sufferer; *secondly*, The  
sufferings he endured; and, *thirdly*, The  
persons for whom, and the ends for which,  
he was *delivered* to these sufferings. In each  
of

of these we shall discover a convincing proof of the love of God, a certain pledge of every necessary blessing.

*First*, Let us consider the dignity of the sufferer. God, saith the Apostle, *spared not his Son*;—his *own*,—his proper Son;—“ the  
 “ brightness of his glory, and the express  
 “ image of his person;” not a son by creation, adoption, or grace, but his “ *begotten*  
 “ Son,” of the same essence with himself, and equal to him in power and in glory. Angels are called *the sons of God*; “ but unto  
 “ which of the angels said he at any time,  
 “ Thou art my Son, this day have I *begotten*  
 “ thee?” Nay, Christ is styled the “ *only be-*  
 “ gotten Son” of God; a title of peculiar  
 significance, importing, that he is not only infinitely great in himself, but likewise infinitely dear to the Father. Yet this is the person whom God sent to save us: and surely, if the love of the giver is to be measured by the worth and value of the gift, we may justly say of God’s love to us, that “ it passeth knowledge.” How loth was Jacob, a fond and indulgent parent to all his children, how loth was he to send Benjamin  
 down

down to Egypt, even when his own life, and the preservation of his whole family, seemed to depend upon it? yet Benjamin was not his *only* son; Jacob had many other children besides: but, behold! the great, the independent JEHOVAH, who would not suffer Abraham to offer up his Isaac, but provided and accepted a ram in his place, gives his *own*, his *only Son*, to be a sacrifice for us.—Here the object is so high, that contemplation cannot reach it; so bright and dazzling, that it overpowers the sight:—we can only say, with David, “This is not the manner of men, O Lord God;” and must with reverence adore, what we shall never be able fully to comprehend.

*Secondly*, From the dignity of the sufferer, let us proceed to consider the sufferings he endured.—Two words are employed by the Apostle to convey to our minds a suitable apprehension both of their greatness and variety. God *spared him not*, but *delivered him up*.—He *spared him not*; that is, he neither excused him from suffering, nor spared him while he suffered; he not only put the bitter cup into his hand, but kept it there till he

he

he had drunk up the dregs of it. With what awful severity did he stir up his justice! “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow.” — “It *pleased* the Lord to bruise him,” saith the evangelical Prophet, “and to put him to grief.” He would not abate one tear, one groan, one drop of blood, any circumstance either of ignominy or pain, that was necessary to demonstrate the evil of sin, and to expiate that guilt which Christ, as our Surety, had appropriated to himself. — Thus God *spared not his own Son*; nay, instead of sparing him, the Apostle adds,

He *delivered him up*. But he doth not say to whom, or to what; because Christ was *delivered* into so many hands, abandoned or given up to such a variety of sufferings, that a minute detail of them would have obliged him to recite the whole history of his life; for in every period of it, “he was *oppressed and afflicted*;” from his birth to his death, “he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs.” — He was *delivered* first into the virgin’s womb; for even then, O Christians! did his passion begin; there

was that temple framed, which afterwards, by wicked hands, was pulled down on mount Calvary; there that body was prepared, which was scourged, and bruised, and nailed to an ignominious and accursed tree. — And being thus made flesh, and brought forth into the world, what was his after life but [a repeated *delivery* of him to poverty, to reproach, to temptation, to persecution:—Such was the pomp, these were the harbingers which introduced him to the cross, and accompanied him to the grave. — “ Deliver me not,” said David, “ into the hands of mine enemies;” and his prayer was heard: But what David obtained, was with-held from David’s Son and Lord; for Christ was *delivered* into the hands of his enemies: He was *delivered* to Judas, who betrayed him; to the chief priests and rulers, who insulted and reviled him; to Herod and his men of war, who set him at nought; to Pilate, who condemned him; to the Roman soldiers, who crucified him:—Nay, more, he was *delivered* to such a sense of divine wrath, that wrath which was due to the sins of men, as, in the pro-

phetic language of David, “withered his heart like grass, and burnt up his bones like a hearth.”——Sin is the sting of death, but the wrath of God is the sting of sin: when that seizes upon an awakened conscience, Oh! what a dark and disconsolate night doth it draw over the sinner’s mind! or, rather, what a hell doth it kindle in his bosom! Yet it doth not, it cannot, appear in its full horror to us; as we see not all the malignity of sin, so neither can we see all the wrath that is due to it: but Christ had a full view of both in their utmost extent; and though he could not despair, for that indeed was impossible, yet the agony he felt was greater by far than any despairing sinner is capable of feeling, who bears only his own burden; whereas he lay pressed under the guilt of a whole world.—It were impious to say, that the holy martyrs were more patient than their Lord;—yet which of all that noble army ever uttered such disconsolate language as he did? Their tortures were their triumph, their sufferings a recreation:—Whereas the Son of God cries out in agony, “Now is  
“ my



“ my soul troubled, and what shall I say ? ”  
—“ My God ! my God ! why hast thou  
“ forsaken me ? ” — Whence these sad and  
mournful complaints ? — Did they proceed  
from any defect of magnanimity and fortitude ? — No, my brethren ; it was the perfection of his mind that seemingly enfeebled him : — the boundless extent of his understanding, which comprehended the full dimensions of sin and of wrath, was the sole cause of his deep and unparalleled distress. It was not the shame nor the torment of the cross that afflicted him ; the thieves who suffered with him endured the same ; — but his soul, if I may be allowed the expression, was *crucified* more than his body ; his heart had sharper nails to pierce it than his hands or his feet : — in his body he felt the rage and cruelty of his murderers ; but in his soul he felt sufferings of a more exquisite nature. — Then he bore the griefs, and carried the sorrows, of all his people ; then he felt not the sins only, but the wounds also, of every broken heart ; the torments of his martyrs, the reproaches of his saints, the poverty, distresses, and persecutions,

which any, which all of them, have felt or shall feel, till the last trumpet shall sound, and he shall come again in his glory.— Thus *God spared not his own Son*: to these inconceivable sufferings was the Lord of life *delivered*.—But for whom, and for what ends, did the Son of God suffer? This was the

*Third* thing I proposed to consider. And after what hath been already suggested, it is unnecessary that I should spend much time upon this head. It is evident that Christ did not suffer on his own account: “He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from finners.”—“He did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips.”—He suffered in the room of guilty man; he was delivered *for us*, saith the Apostle, not only for our benefit, but in our place:—“He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”—“He suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”—Do you ask, Why *God spared not his own Son*? The answer is,—That he might spare us: he delivered him

up to temporal sufferings, that we might be delivered from everlasting punishment: “ For God so loved the world, that he gave  
“ his only begotten Son, that whosoever  
“ believeth in him, might not perish, but  
“ have everlasting life.”——Do you ask again, Who may lay claim to the benefit of this gift? I readily answer, Every child of Adam without exception, who feels his need of a Saviour, and is willing to accept him as he is offered in the gospel. The death, as well as the birth of Christ, “ is good tidings of great joy *unto all people* ;” to Gentiles as well as to Jews; to men of all kindreds, nations, and languages; to sinners of all sorts, the vilest not excepted; “ He is the Lamb of God, which taketh  
“ away the sin of the *world*.”——Every labouring and heavy-laden sinner is invited to come unto him; and “ him that cometh  
“ he will in no wise cast out.”——In this sense, Christ is the “ Saviour of all men;” though I apprehend, that as the Apostle, in this passage, is writing purposely for the comfort of real Christians, this assertion, *that Christ was delivered up for us all*, is

chiefly intended to signify, that all true believers have an equal interest in this gift of God; the weakest, as well as the strongest; the dejected, as well as the joyful; the convert of yesterday, as well as the oldest servant in his family: for the inference he draws from it is expressly limited to those who have received Christ: *How shall he not WITH HIM, ALSO freely give us all things?* — This leads me to the

*Second* branch of my subject; which is, to show,

That the gift which God hath already bestowed upon sinners of mankind, affords every sincere believer the most absolute certainty, that nothing shall be withheld from him that is necessary to make him happy.

The Apostle, to give weight and emphasis to his conclusion, puts it into the form of a question, *How shall he not give?* — It is impossible that he should not give; — darkness and light may sooner become one, than that God should deny to believers in Christ aught that is conducive to their

their real felicity.—He speaks, you see, in the language of assurance and triumph: and well he might; for if *God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*, what can be supposed to stop the current of his bounty?—Is there any benefit too valuable for God to bestow?—That cannot be: the gift he hath already conferred, is infinitely more precious than all that remains to be given. Other things may be estimated, but “the riches of Christ are *unsearchable*.”—“In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead *bodily*.”—Shall the unworthiness of the creature restrain his munificence?—This objection is fully obviated by the free and gratuitous manner in which God hath bestowed his “*unspeakable gift*;”—for it is evident, that we must have been far more unworthy of a Saviour, than we possibly can be of any subsequent favour: and seeing *God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*, unmerited, nay, unsolicited, what bounds can be set to the Christian’s hope? especially when we consider,—that Christ was *delivered up to sufferings*

ferings and death, for this very end, that he might remove those obstructions that lay in the road of mercy, and render the exercise of it consistent with the honour of the divine government.——The sacrifice of IMMANUEL, afforded such a demonstration of the unchangeable holiness and justice of God, that without staining the glory of these perfections, he may now dispense to penitent believers, all those blessings their circumstances can require: for what the Apostle says of the pardon of sin, (*Rom. iii. 25, 26.*), may lawfully be extended to every other benefit: “ God hath  
“ set forth his Son to be a propitiation,  
“ through faith in his blood, to declare his  
“ righteousness for the remission of sins;  
“ —that he might be *just*, and the justifier  
“ of him who believeth in Jesus.”——  
Nay, my brethren, it is not only consistent with the justice of God, to do good to those who believe in Jesus; but, I speak it with reverence, it would be inconsistent with his justice to withhold good from them; for Christ hath actually purchased every blessing they need. He was *delivered*

itp “ by the determinate counsel and fore-  
 “ knowledge of God;” not casually, or un-  
 advisedly, but in consequence of a previous  
 agreement or covenant; in which he freely  
 consented, on his part, “ to make his soul  
 “ an offering for sin;” and the Father pro-  
 mised, that “ he should see his seed;” that  
 he should “ prolong his days;” that “ the  
 “ pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his  
 “ hand;” and that he should “ see the tra-  
 “ vail of his soul, and be satisfied.” Of  
 which solemn transaction we have an au-  
 thentic copy recorded by the Prophet *Isaiab*,  
 chap. liii. 10, 11.

What shall we then say to these things?  
 —Hath God already bestowed the greatest  
 of all gifts, the *unspeakable gift* of his own  
 dear Son?—Did he bestow it freely, when  
 there was nothing in the creature to merit  
 or invite his love, but, on the contrary,  
 every thing to provoke his holy indigna-  
 tion?—Was this gift designed to pave the  
 way for other blessings?—Nay, further,  
 were all other blessings actually purchased  
 by the infinite sacrifice of this divine Sa-  
 viour?—How firm then is the foundation  
 of

of the Christian's hope?—With what humble, yet triumphant confidence, may the believer adopt the words of my text; and put the question, against all doubts, all fears, all temptations that may assail him, *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

But we have not yet examined the grant itself. Shall I say the contents of it are large? The expression is too feeble;—my brethren, they are boundless, they are infinite: these two words *all things*, comprehend both heaven and earth in their bosom; and thus they are explained by this same Apostle, 1 Cor. iii. 21. “All things  
 “are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or  
 “Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or  
 “things present, or things to come; all are  
 “yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is  
 “God's.”—And is “the world” too a part of the Christian's portion? Yes, my friends. But then it is “the world” conquered by faith, and “crucified to us by the cross” of our Redeemer. “The lust of the eye, the  
 “lust of the flesh, and the pride of life,”  
 are



are no parts of that world whereof the Apostle there speaks, except it be in this sense, that they are subdued and mortified. Christ did not submit to hunger and thirst, that we might riot in luxury; he did not become poor, that we might possess great estates; he did not stoop to ignominy and to death, that we might be dignified with worldly honours. These are not included among the *all things* in my text.—The truth is, they hardly deserve the name of *things*; —they are mere ciphers, the creatures of opinion and fancy, which have no significance, no price, but what mistake and delusion have wantonly set upon them.—Our inheritance then is not diminished when all these are left out; nor hath the Christian any inducement to vitiate his charter, by interlining it with those carnal additions which a vain imagination is too apt to suggest. With Christ he hath *all things* which are subservient to the purposes for which Christ was *delivered*: pardon to remove his guilt; grace to aid him in the performance of duty; comfort to support him under the pressure of affliction; every

every needful supply during his journey through this world, and immortal life and happiness in the next.—Hath not the Christian then “ a goodly heritage,” who hath God and the creature, grace and glory, time and eternity; who is safe among enemies as well as among friends; who lives in communion with God on earth, and shall dwell with him in heaven for evermore? Say, O Christians, hath such a man reason to complain of his portion?

But let it be observed, that all these things are given *with* Christ: his person and his benefits can never be divided. This is the order which God hath established:—He first gives us his own Son; and when that *unspeakable gift* is thankfully received, then, together *with his Son*, he *freely gives us all other things*.—But without him, we have no right to any thing we possess; the food we eat, the raiment we put on, are not ours; we are usurpers, we are robbers; and as such, shall be severely reckoned with at last.—This shall be the condemnation of unbelievers at the great day, that they fraudently

dulently seized upon their Master's goods, and rejected the Saviour, through whom alone they could have obtained a righteous title to them: and their condemnation shall be the heavier upon this account, that the Saviour was in their offer, and with him a full right to every benefit they enjoyed.—Think of this, ye who forget God, and have hitherto turned a deaf ear to the calls of his grace.—And,

Let those who have complied with the gospel-invitation, and thankfully accepted the Lord Jesus Christ, take comfort from what hath been spoken upon this subject, and approach the table of the Lord with enlarged expectations of obtaining all that is necessary to render them truly happy.—God perfectly knoweth what we stand most in need of: he knoweth whether health or sickness, riches or poverty; whether cordials to cherish, or medicines of a different operation, are best for us. With respect to these, it is our duty and our interest to subject our choice entirely to his pleasure. This should be our chief, our only care, to renew from  
the

the heart our thankful acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ: and then we may be assured that nothing can come amiss to us: For *he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, shall certainly with him also freely give us all things.* Amen.

S E R-

## S E R M O N XII.

ROMANS viii. 31.

*What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

**T**HIS chapter contains a large and animated detail of the privileges that belong to believers in Christ Jesus; and lays open those springs of true consolation, with which the gospel-covenant is plentifully stored. Nothing is wanting that our present condition renders necessary or desirable; a suitable and an effectual remedy is provided both for our guilt and pollution. No sin can exceed the merit of a Redeemer's blood; no lust can withstand the power of his victorious grace; so that we may justly adopt the words of the returning prodigal, and say, as he did, that "in our Father's house there is bread enough, and to spare."

In the two preceding verses, the Apostle leads us upward to the source and fountain

tain of all those blessings we presently possess, or hope to enjoy; namely, the eternal love of an unchangeable God. It was his self-moving goodness that prompted him to devise the method of our recovery: and the scheme is so wisely laid, so complete and finished in all its parts, that no power or policy can defeat the execution of it: “For whom God did foreknow, he  
 “ also did predestinate to be conformed to  
 “ the image of his Son, that he might be  
 “ the first-born among many brethren.  
 “ Moreover, whom he did predestinate,  
 “ them he also *called*: and whom he *call-*  
 “ *ed*, them he also justified: and whom  
 “ he justified, them he also glorified.”——  
 So that the man whom God hath “ *called*  
 “ by his grace,” is just as safe as Omnipotence can make him. Looking backward to God’s purpose before time commenced, and forward to the glory that awaits him when time shall be no more, he may boldly bid defiance to every adverse power, saying, in the triumphant language of this Apostle, “ Who shall lay any thing  
 “ to the charge of God’s elect?” and,  
 “ Who

“ Who shall separate us from the love of  
“ God ? ”

The words I am to discourse upon, present the inspired author to our view in a very striking and agreeable light. Transported and overpowered with the greatness of the subject, he makes a sudden and solemn pause; and then asks the question, — *What shall we say to these things?* — Nothing can be said *against* them: and it is impossible to exceed in their just commendation. *What then shall we say to them?* What use shall we make of these comfortable truths? or what conclusion shall we draw from them? — This I take to be the true meaning of the question. And an important question it is: Blessed be God, who put it into the heart of his servant both to propose and answer it. — Well, then, *what doth* a St Paul *say to these things?* or rather, what answer doth the Spirit of God indite? — Let every believer in Christ listen with joy, and apply it to himself: *If God be for us, who can be against us?*

As the Apostle, through the whole of

this chapter, speaks in the character of an assured Christian, the word *if* cannot be supposed to imply any doubtfulness or uncertainty about the truth of the proposition to which it relates; but rather taketh it for granted, and is of the same import, as though the Apostle had expressed himself thus: *Seeing that God is for us*: And therefore, instead of proving what none will deny, namely, that this privilege doth really belong to sanctified believers, I shall rather, in the *first* place, briefly unfold its meaning and worth;—and then show, in the *second* place, what a solid foundation it lays for the joyful conclusion, or rather the triumphant challenge, in the close of the verse, *Who can be against us?*

I begin with unfolding the privilege itself, *God is for us*. And it necessarily implies, that

God is our friend. This is the very lowest sense the words will bear; and yet, my brethren, who can tell, nay, who can conceive the importance and worth of this single blessing?—To be in a state of fa-

your



our with the greatest and the best of Beings, the Father of our spirits too, upon whom we constantly depend for life, and all things; how delightful the thought! How dismal to suppose ourselves in the opposite condition!—As I speak at present to real Christians only, I need not enlarge upon this branch of your happiness. Many of you, doubtless, can remember the time when, lying under the sense of unpardoned guilt, and the fearful apprehensions of deserved wrath, you would have parted with ten thousand worlds like this, for one ray of God's countenance, for the remotest hint of pardon and acceptance. — Such, I know, will require no commendation of the divine friendship: You have already learned from experience, the surest and most convincing teacher, that no enjoyment is comparable to the assurance of God's love; nay, that all other enjoyments are tasteless, or rather bitter, without it.

But the expression carries in it a higher meaning than this: It not only imports that God is reconciled to us; but that he

likewise taketh our part, and is active for our good.—*God is for us*; that is, he is *on our side*, and employs all his perfections for our safety and happiness. He not only graciously forgives what hath formerly been done by us against himself; but, as far as can consist with the perfection and happiness of his nature, he feels and re-sents what by others is at any time done against us. “He that toucheth you,” saith he, “toucheth the apple of mine eye.” And what shall we think of this?—Balaam could say, “Surely there is no “enchantment” against Jacob, neither is “there any divination” against Israel;” for “the Lord his God is with him, and “the shout of a king is among them.”—Yet this privilege is common to all believers in Christ: the Lord of hosts is their guardian as well as their friend; he chargeth himself with their protection; he adopts them into his family; and not only dignifies them with the title of children, but doth likewise enrich them with all the immunities and privileges which that high and endearing appellation imports. And what

what may they not expect from such a Father? whose wisdom is infinite, whose power is irresistible, whose "mercy is everlasting," and whose "truth endureth to all generations."—And when I mention the truth of God, this leads me to observe another important sense, in which it may be justly said, that *God is for us*; namely,

That he is our God in covenant, and hath pledged his veracity and faithfulness for every blessing our circumstances can require.—It is comfortable to know that God is not only reconciled to us, but that he likewise taketh our part, and is active for our good.—Nevertheless, as that jealousy, which is inseparable from a consciousness of guilt, might still suggest to us, that some unforeseen cause may throw us out of his protection; therefore "God being willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, hath confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impos-

“strong consolation, who have fled for  
“refuge to lay hold upon the hope set  
“before us.” God hath not left us to  
spell out our privileges, or to reason our-  
selves into the hope of good things; he  
hath plainly told us what is in his heart;  
he hath put his merciful designs into the  
form of a covenant, and expressed them  
in a variety of gracious promises; by the  
help of which we may lay hold upon his  
truth, and plead the honour of the God-  
head for every blessing we need. Nay,  
this covenant is sealed with the blood of  
his own Son; upon which account it  
sometimes gets the name of a *testament*;  
that is, an irrevocable deed, made sure  
and unalterable by the death of the *testa-*  
*tor*. Hereby the firmest foundation is laid  
for our faith and hope; and that our joy  
may be full, he hath instituted the holy  
sacrament of the supper, wherein visible  
pledges of his love are put into our hands;  
and by bread and wine, the appointed sym-  
bols of the broken body and shed blood of  
our Redeemer, Christ, and all the benefits

of his purchase, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.

These few hints may serve to give you some view both of the meaning and worth of this important privilege:—*God is for us*:—he is our friend;—he is on our side;—he is our God in covenant, and hath given us every kind of security our hearts could desire, for whatever is conducive to our real interest.—In all, and in each of these respects, may the Christian say, that *God is for him*.—Let us now consider, in the

*Second* place, The consequence of this privilege, or the joyful conclusion which the Apostle draws from it:—*Who can be against us?*

It is expressed, you see, in the form of a question or challenge: St Paul, in the name of all true believers, gives a bold defiance to earth and hell, and triumphs in the assurance of their safety and happiness.—The question doth not imply, that they who have God on their side, shall have no enemies at all; such an immunity would be inconsistent with a state of trial, and the

Scriptures give us no warrant to expect any thing of this kind; on the contrary, they assure us, that “through much tribulation  
 “we must enter into the kingdom of heaven.”—“Our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.”—“We wrestle not only  
 “against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers  
 “of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickednesses in high places.”—And as, in the days of Abraham, “he that  
 “was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the spirit; even so it  
 “is now.” Nor shall this warfare cease, till that great day of the Lord come, when  
 “all his enemies shall be made his footstool.” But the question, or defiance, may lawfully be considered as importing the following particulars.

*1st*, That none shall be against us whose favour is desirable.

That the children of God too frequently fall out among themselves, and squabble in the dark, is a melancholy truth; and that these contentions are unseemly and hurtful things,

things, cannot be denied : But a little more day-light would soon put an end to the scuffle, make them ashamed of their mistakes, and unite them in the bonds of an everlasting friendship.—The persons I speak of, are they who are enemies to believers as such : and of them I say, that their favour is not worthy to be coveted, neither doth the want of it deserve to be regretted. What regard is due to the judgement of those who are so blind, that they see no beauty in the infinitely perfect God himself? especially when their enmity against us is only the natural effect of this woful stupidity; according to that assertion of the Apostle John, “ There-  
“ fore the world knoweth us not, because it  
“ knew him not.”——“ If the world hate  
“ you,” said our Lord, “ ye know that it  
“ hated me before it hated you.—If ye were  
“ of the world, the world would love his  
“ own; but because ye are not of the world,  
“ but I have chosen you out of the world,  
“ *therefore* the world hateth you.” And ought any wise man to be disquieted on that account?——Nay, my brethren, did we view our enemies in this light, we should  
look

look upon them as objects of pity, rather than of fear or resentment; and any little hurt they could do to us, would scarcely be felt, whilst we thought of the infinitely greater mischief they were doing to themselves.

2dly, *If God be for us, who can prevail against us?* Who shall be able totally to subdue us, to deprive us of the glory and happiness we look for? Indeed, if the safety of believers depended on their own ability to keep hold of God; if they were left, as it were, to hang upon him by the mere strength of their own arms; a little force or cunning might soon loosen their grasp, and pull them away from him. But herein, my brethren, lies their security, an omnipotent God keepeth fast hold of them; they are committed to that good Shepherd “who  
“ gathers the lambs with his arms, and carries them in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young:” They are joined to God by the bond of an “everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure;” and they who would attempt to tear them from him, must first of all make  
void



void that covenant, reverse the unchangeable purpose of God, and oblige the Almighty to resign his power.—Such is the desperate enterprise in which the enemies of God's children are engaged: it is not the creature, but the Creator they have to cope with; Jehovah himself must be overcome, before the weakest believer can fall into their hands. Justly then might the Apostle say, as in the close of this chapter, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?—Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

—Nay, my text will allow us to advance a step farther, and to say, in the

3<sup>d</sup> place, *If God be for us*, who shall be able to do us any material hurt in the mean time?

time?—To be assured of final salvation, is indeed an unspeakable blessing; to know that our enemies shall not totally prevail against us, is a desirable privilege: yet a great addition would be made to our comfort, could we also be assured, that their malice and enmity, instead of hurting us, shall contribute as means to promote our true interest.—Well, then, the Apostle, under the direction of God's unerring Spirit, hath asserted this in the strongest and most absolute terms: "We know," saith he at the 28th verse of this chapter; we do not barely hope, but "*we know*, that all things "work together for good, to them that love "God, to them who are the called accord- "ing to his purpose."—Satan endeavours to blow out the spark of grace; but instead of that, he kindles it into a flame, and only blows away the ashes that covered it.—He pliieth the faints with his fiery darts; but instead of killing them, he renders them more expert in the art of defence, teacheth them the use of "the shield of faith," and the other parts of their spiritual armour.—In short, God effectually baffles every at-  
temp'

tempt of their enemies: He “beats their  
 “swords into plough-shares, and their spears  
 “into pruning-hooks;” that is, he converts  
 their hostile weapons into instruments of  
 husbandry, for the culture and improve-  
 ment of his people, that in greater abun-  
 dance they may bring forth “those fruits  
 “of righteousness, which are, through Je-  
 “sus Christ, to his praise and glory.”

THUS have I opened the joyful import of  
 this question, or challenge, *If God be for us,  
 who can be against us?* And in the review of  
 all that hath been said, can we forbear to  
 cry out with the holy Psalmist, “Happy is  
 “the people that is in such a case; yea,  
 “happy is that people whose God is the  
 “Lord!”—What I further intend is, to  
 give you a few plain and necessary direc-  
 tions about the use you ought to make of  
 this comfortable subject.

But before I proceed to these, compassion  
 to the souls of some who may be hearing  
 me, obliges me to set before you a very dif-  
 ferent prospect, by inverting the question,  
 and putting it in this form:

*If*

*If God be against us, who then can be for us?*

“ The Lord is in his holy temple, the  
 “ Lord’s throne is in heaven: his eyes be-  
 “ hold, his eye-lids try the children of men.  
 “ The Lord trieth the righteous: but the  
 “ wicked, and him that loveth violence, his  
 “ soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall  
 “ rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an  
 “ horrible tempest: this shall be the portion  
 “ of their cup.”—“ Thine hand shall find  
 “ out all thine enemies,” saith the Psalmist,  
 “ thy right hand shall find out those that  
 “ hate thee: thou shalt make them as a fiery  
 “ oven in the time of thine anger; the  
 “ Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath,  
 “ and the fire shall devour them.” How  
 awful are these words, uttered by God  
 himself! “ I, even I am he, and there is  
 “ no God with me: I kill, and I make alive;  
 “ I wound, and I heal; neither is there any  
 “ that can deliver out of my hand. For I  
 “ lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I  
 “ live for ever. If I whet my glittering  
 “ sword, and mine hand take hold on judge-  
 “ ment; I will render vengeance to mine  
 “ enemies,

“ enemies, and will reward them that hate  
“ me: I will make mine arrows drunk with  
“ blood.”——And “ Can you stand before  
“ his indignation? Can you abide in the  
“ fierceness of his anger, when his fury is  
“ poured out like fire, and the rocks are  
“ thrown down by him?” Consider this,  
ye that forget God, lest he tear you in  
pieces when there shall be none to deliver.  
Who can make you happy, if God pro-  
nounce you miserable? Who can give  
quietness, if he cause trouble? Who can  
screen you from his justice? And, Oh! who  
can support you under the weight of his  
vengeance?—— For the Lord’s sake, take a  
serious view of your condition; and then,  
turn your eyes to that compassionate Re-  
deemer, whose arms are yet extended to  
embrace you: Flee speedily to him as your  
only sanctuary: Let the earth be acquainted  
with your bended knees; let the air be ac-  
quainted with your fervent supplications,  
till you have reason to conclude, that you  
are vitally united to the Lord Jesus Christ,  
who “ of God is made,” unto all who be-  
lieve in him, “ wisdom, and righteous-  
“ ness,

“ness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

As for you who are Christians indeed, to whom all the comfort of this text belongs, let me beg your attention to a few necessary advices, with which I shall conclude this discourse.

*1st*, Beware of despising your enemies; for that shall betray you into security and carelessness. — Remember, that however weak they are in comparison with God, yet in themselves they are strong and formidable; insomuch that were God to look on, and leave you to your own defence, you should quickly and easily be overmatched. In other armies, the strength of the general consisteth in the number and valour of his troops; but in the Christian army, the strength of the whole host, and of every soldier in particular, lies in him who is the Lord of hosts. We ought therefore to maintain an habitual jealousy of ourselves: we are never in greater danger than when we are most confident that we are out of danger; so that the caution which the Apostle gave to the Gentile converts, is always in season: “Be not high-minded, but fear:”  
and

and again, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." At the same time, though you must not despise your enemies, yet neither, in the

2d place, Ought you to be afraid of them. The true Christian temper lies in the just medium betwixt these opposite extremes: and therefore we are exhorted, not only "to watch," but also "to quit ourselves like men;" — "to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ,"—and to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." — "Fear not," saith God, "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." After this encouraging manner doth God speak to his children. Nay, he chides them when they betray the least timorousness in his service; as in Isaiah, chap. li. 12, 13. "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass? and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the

VOL. I. X " heavens,

“ heavens, and laid the foundations of the  
 “ earth? and hast feared continually every  
 “ day, because of the fury of the oppressor,  
 “ as if he were ready to destroy? And  
 “ where is the fury of the oppressor?”——  
 —Hear how David triumphs in the affu-  
 rance of his safety, upon grounds which  
 are common to all believers in Christ:  
 “ The Lord is my light and my salvation,  
 “ whom shall I fear? The Lord is the  
 “ strength of my life, of whom shall I be  
 “ afraid? Though an host should encamp  
 “ against me, my heart shall not fear: tho’  
 “ war should rise against me, in this will I  
 “ be confident.” Let the wicked tremble,  
 they have reason to do so; but “ let the  
 “ heart of every one rejoice that seeks the  
 “ Lord.” Victory is insured to you; the  
 great “ Captain of salvation” hath already  
 conquered all your enemies, and ere long  
 he shall return, and bring you with singing  
 into the heavenly Zion: then shall you ob-  
 tain gladness and joy, and sorrow and  
 mourning shall flee away.—But as the  
 strength by which you must overcome is  
 not



not your own, this makes it necessary that I direct and exhort you, in the

3<sup>d</sup> place, To depend upon God, and to walk closely with him. For this end, “ abide in Christ ;” for there it is alone that God and sinners can meet as friends. “ God is *in Christ*,” saith the Apostle Paul, “ *reconciling* the world unto himself :” indeed he is no where else in the character of a *reconciler* ; and consequently, if we wish to dwell under his shadow, it is necessary that *we* be *in Christ* also. This was one of the solemn advices which our Lord gave to his disciples a little before his death : “ Abide in me ;”—“ as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me ;” for “ without me,” or separated from me, “ ye can do nothing.” In the

4<sup>th</sup> and last place, Seeing *God is for us*, let us be *for him* : let us appear openly on his side, and act with resolution and vigour in his service.—God can do his work without us ; he stands in no need of our assistance ; yet such is his condescension, that he invites us to the honour of being “ workers

“ together with himself.” And what can fire our ambition if this do not!—He is just now calling aloud, both by his word and by his providence, “ Who will rise up  
 “ for me against the evil doers? who will  
 “ stand up for me against the workers of  
 “ iniquity?” O! let each of us make haste to reply with the evangelical prophet, “ Here am I, send me.”—At the same time, let us echo back the call, and humbly expostulate with him in the words which his own Spirit hath dictated: “ Arise, O  
 “ Lord, and plead thine own cause; re-  
 “ member how the foolish man reproach-  
 “ eth thee daily.”—“ It is time for *thee*  
 “ to work, for they have made void thy  
 “ law.”—Thus doth God permit us to remind him of his own interest, while we ourselves are in a posture for active service; and such pleadings are highly pleasing and acceptable.—Let us then, my brethren, in our respective stations, do what in us lies, to advance the kingdom of Christ in the world, and to bear down every thing that stands in opposition to it. Let the  
 “ righteous be bold as lions;” and then  
 may

may we hope, that “iniquity,” as ashamed, shall hide her head, and “stop her mouth.” At any rate, “our record shall be on high,” and “our reward with our God.” He will receive us unto himself, “in that day when “he maketh up his jewels:” and then shall an everlasting distinction be made “between “the righteous and the wicked; between “him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.” *Amen.*

## S E R M O N XIII.

LUKE xii. 35, 36, 37.

*Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.*

**T**HE obvious design of this passage is, to excite us to a serious preparation for the awful solemnities of death and judgment. We are here directed to consider ourselves as servants, who have a Master in heaven; of whose return we have the strongest assurance, but are utterly ignorant of the precise time of his coming; and therefore it is both our duty and our interest, to be always on our guard, and in a fit posture to receive

receive him: The happy consequence of which shall be, that our Lord will not only approve of our prudent and zealous concern to please him, but he will even delight to honour us: he will not deal with us as servants, but as friends; and will bestow upon us a reward infinitely beyond what any services could intitle us to.—So that here we have a short, but comprehensive, account of the Christian's work and recompence; our duty and encouragement are both set before us.

Our duty is represented, by the diligent care of servants, to have every thing in readiness for the reception of their absent master. As the Jews, and other eastern people, commonly wore long and loose garments, it was necessary, when they had any thing to do which required strength or agility, that they should tuck them up, and gird them close about them: Now, says our Saviour, in allusion to this, *Let your loins be girded about*: that is, lay aside every thing that may entangle you in your work: *let your lights be continually burning*, and ye yourselves, in every other respect, like servants, who are

anxious to please their Lord, and to be found diligent in their proper business, at whatever hour he shall come; that, *when he knocketh*, you may be ready to give him present admittance, and not be surpris'd in any disorder.

The reward of the diligent and faithful servant is described in the same allegorical manner: *Verily*, says he, when their master returns, and finds them thus employed, he will bestow upon them some extraordinary marks of honour and regard: He will not consider them as mere servants, “who have done no more than was their duty;” but will advance them to the rank of friends: he will entertain them in the most liberal and gracious manner at his own table; yea, so condescending is he, that in some respects he will lay aside his superiority, as if he should *gird himself* like a servant, and *come forth* and wait upon them.

I shall at present confine myself to the first of these subjects:—namely, the duty we owe to our absent Lord.—It is this which more nearly concerns us in the mean time; the glorious reward mentioned in  
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the latter part of my text, belongs chiefly to our encouragement; and in that view I shall have occasion to speak of it before I conclude.

Now, by this figurative description of the duty we owe to our absent Lord, we are plainly taught, in the

1<sup>st</sup> place, That we should lay aside every thing that may encumber us in the service of our Master; *Let your loins be girded about.* To the same purpose the Apostle Peter exhorts us, 1 *Peter* i. 13. "Wherefore gird up  
" the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope  
" to the end, for the grace that is to be  
" brought unto you at the revelation of  
" Jesus Christ." The New Testament abounds with many exhortations of the same kind; which will appear to have a peculiar propriety, if we consider those figurative representations of our work to which they are applied. It is called a *race*, a *strife*, a *warfare*: we must run, and wrestle, and fight; and therefore have need of all our strength and activity. Long garments are for ornament,

nament, but not for use : these must be gathered up, or laid aside, when a man addresses himself to any laborious business. Now such is the nature of our Christian work : “ The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force : ” We must do more than *seek* admittance ; we must “ *strive* to enter in at the strait gate ; “ for many shall *seek* to enter in, and shall “ not be able.” Think of this, my brethren ; ponder the difficulties in your warfare ; view the greatness of your work ; consider the number and strength of your enemies ; look through that large system of duties you have to perform ; and then you must be convinced, that the most vigorous exertion of every active power is no more than needful in such circumstances as ours. We must therefore, I say, labour to get rid of every incumbrance, and to be always in a posture for active service. I need not tell you what these incumbrances are. In general, whatever unfits us for duty, that must be laid aside. More particularly, an earthly mind, pride of heart, and the love  
of



of sensual pleasures, are three great enemies to holy diligence in the work of the Lord. Whilst our affections lie thus low, it is impossible we can do any thing to purpose; nay, if this be their prevailing bent, we shall act in direct opposition to the laws of our Master. In short, our first care should be, to correct that disorder which is within us; to get our hearts purified by the Spirit of God, and raised above the profits, and pleasures, and honours, of this vain world: for “out of the heart are the issues of life;” and such as our affections are, such will the course of our actions be. — But it is not enough to have our *loins* thus *girded about*, we must also, in the

2d place, Have *our lights burning*.——

This may import the care we should bestow, to have our minds furnished with the knowledge of our duty; for as servants cannot work to any purpose in the dark, so neither can we be good and fruitful Christians, without a competent knowledge of that divine law which is the only infallible rule of our conduct. If we shall  
take

take this to be the meaning of the words, they no doubt teach us a most important and necessary lesson; namely, That we should carefully search the sacred Scriptures, and, with a sincere and humble temper of mind, labour to know what is “the good, “and acceptable, and perfect will of our “God.”

But I rather incline to understand this expression, as importing the lively and constant exercise of all our Christian graces. This indeed is the best preparation for our Lord's return.—To have our repentance mourning over our past sins, and keeping the heart humble under a sense of guilt;—our faith applying the blood of Christ for pardon, and deriving at the same time strength from above for vanquishing our lusts, that “sin may no more have dominion over us;”—our love embracing an unseen Saviour, and extending to all his members;—our hope casting anchor within the veil, and keeping the soul fixed and steady, amidst all the revolutions of this changing world;—our patience triumphing over sufferings; our meekness passing  
by

by injuries, blessing and doing good to our most inveterate enemies;—and, by the happy influence of all these, the light of our external conduct adorning our profession, and engaging others to glorify our heavenly Father:—This is to have our *lights burning* indeed: this will make us ready to meet our Lord. We shall not be backward *to open* at his call, when all is thus cleansed and in good order within.—And this is the preparation we ought chiefly to study.—Our readiness to work will not avail us by itself; we must be doing, our work must be advancing: for in vain do we trim the lamp, if it do not shine and give light; in vain are *our loins girded about*, if we have nothing to do, or neglect our business.—Further, in the

3<sup>d</sup> place, We are here directed to be constantly on our guard, and to keep a strict and careful *watch* till our Master return.

Watchfulness is frequently in Scripture opposed to sleep: and that even the best Christians have need of this caution, we may learn from our Saviour's parable of the

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the ten virgins ; where it is said, (*Matth.* xxv. 5.), that “ while the bridegroom tarried, *they all,*” that is, the wife as well as the foolish, “ slumbered and slept.” Carnal and unregenerated sinners are represented in Scripture as being in a state of death ; quite stupid and unfeeling : but even those who have got a principle of new life, may suffer very sad decays ; and though they do not totally expire, yet they may fall into that sleep which is the image of death.—Though the precious oil which feeds the light, will not suffer it to go out ; yet for want of trimming, it may grow so dim and obscure, that it shall scarcely be discernible. Now, this, my brethren, is a very melancholy situation ; and it highly concerneth us to guard against it with our utmost care. We read of some who lost their first love ; nay, Paul complains of the Hebrews, that they had lost even their former knowledge, and had need “ to be taught again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God.”——“ The hand of the diligent maketh rich ; and he that is slothful is brother to him that is a great waster.”

“ waſter.” Indeed, if holineſs were natural to us, then it might abide with us, and grow up of its own accord, without any care on our part: but as it is of a foreign extraction, and as our hearts are choaked up with noxious weeds, this precious ſeed muſt be watched over, and carefully tended, otherwiſe it will ſtarve and decay. The ſleeping Chriſtian cannot thrive; and if he be ſurpriſed in that condition, when his Maſter calls, how great ſhall his diſorder be! We ſhould therefore beware of ſlothfulneſs; we have ſtill work to do, and God hath not allowed us one moment more than is needful.—Let us then awake to our buſineſs; let us never think we have finiſhed our taſk ſo long as there is any part of the day to run; but let us imitate the great Apoſtle of the Gentiles, who, notwithſtanding his high attainments in religion, yet “ did not think he  
“ had already obtained, either was al-  
“ ready perfect; but, forgetting the things  
“ which were behind, and reaching forth  
“ unto thoſe things which were before,  
“ he preſſed towards the mark, for the  
“ prize

“ prize of the high calling of God in Christ  
“ Jesus.”

But we may consider *watchfulness* in another light; namely, as a duty arising from our present circumstances of danger. —And in this view the necessity of it will appear unspeakably great; for though we could acquire such a stock of graces, that we needed not make any further addition to them; nay, though we might even lie down and sleep, without any apprehension of their decay; yet if we be in danger from without, if thieves may break through and steal our treasure, then of necessity we must be constantly on our guard: nor is it wise in us to drop our watch for one moment. —And who can doubt that this is our situation? “ Watch  
“ and pray,” said our Saviour, “ that ye  
“ enter not into temptation.” So great is our danger, that our own vigilance is not sufficient to secure us; we must call in foreign assistance, we must implore the divine aid; for “ unless an almighty guar-  
“ dian keep the city, the watchman wa-  
“ ketn in vain.” —Yea, when Satan de-  
fired

fired to have Peter, that he might “ sift him as wheat,” our Saviour himself, who had encountered this enemy, and knew his strength, prayed for his zealous disciple, that his faith might not fail. And if both *watchfulness* and *prayer* be necessary for our defence, alas! what shall become of those who neglect both? One compares the gracious soul to a ship richly laden; which is the greater temptation to pirates upon that very account. I say not this to discourage the sincere Christian; for greater is he that is with you than all that can be against you: but methinks it should excite you to double your watchfulness. If you have profited by the means of grace; — if your treasure is increased; — instead of growing secure, you should be the more humble and watchful upon that very account: — for needful is that caution, “ Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” Once more, in the

4<sup>th</sup> place, Our Saviour here directs us to consider ourselves as fellow-servants and members of his family; and in this view,

another part of our preparation for his coming, must lie in the performance of the duties we owe to each other, as well as of those duties which more immediately respect himself. This is more clearly pointed out to us in the 45th and 46th verses of this chapter, where we find a fearful threatening denounced against those who neglect this mutual relation: “ But, and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men-servants, and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken: the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.” It appears from this passage, that the faithful discharge of social duties, has a higher rank in religion than many seem to apprehend. It is not indeed the whole of religion; neither can it be called the most essential part of it; for no doubt the duties of the highest class are those which belong to the first table of the law, and arise from our first and most lasting



lasting relation. We were the subjects of God before we became members of human society; and if we prove unfaithful to God, it cannot surely give him any pleasure to behold confederated rebels living in the most perfect agreement among themselves: so that a man may, in several respects, prove an agreeable, perhaps an useful, member of society, and after all, be condemned for his ingratitude to God, and rebellion against his Maker. Nevertheless, the discharge of those duties which we owe to one another, is of such importance in religion, that I can warrantably affirm, no man shall be saved who transgresses them, or even who wilfully and habitually neglects them. — It is not to be expected, nor indeed is it necessary, that I should give you a detail of these: they are universally better understood than they are practised. Our duty here extends to all the different expressions of righteousness and love; and the rule is both short and plain: *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.* The best offices are those which promote our neighbour's spiritual

and eternal interest; and therefore religious instruction, friendly advice, and seasonable reproof, cannot be dispensed with. Whatever tends to discourage vice, or to promote the interests of religion and virtue, is strictly incumbent upon us, according to the power and authority which our station gives us; and therefore he is but half a magistrate, and a poor half too, who resents only the injury that is done to men, and overlooks those horrid instances of impiety against God, which the good laws of our land authorise him to punish. In short, whatever be our condition in life, there are certain duties belonging to it which we must perform: and I shall only add, that as the obligation is mutual, both parties are equally bound, and neither can withhold from the other what is due, without an injury: nor is the superior less strictly bound to those who are below him, than the inferior to those who are above him; and they who possess the highest stations are equally obliged with the meanest of their brethren, to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the world,” and to promote the glory of God,  
and

and the welfare of human society, by the faithful and conscientious use of all those talents which God hath put into their hands; and if they do otherwise, they shall be condemned and punished by their Master and Judge, when he cometh again.

After this manner are we taught to make ready for our Lord's return.

We must lay aside every thing that may encumber us in his service; we must labour to know our Master's will, and to keep all our graces in lively and vigorous exercise;—particularly, we should guard against slothfulness and security, and, from a sense of our danger, keep a strict and habitual watch against the enemies of our souls;—at the same time regarding each other as fellow-servants, and faithfully performing those social duties which belong to our several stations and relations. To all which I might further add, that we should earnestly look out for our Master's coming, and long for his second and glorious appearance, when we, and all his faithful servants, shall be admitted into his immediate presence, and be enabled to serve him with-

out any mixture of sin, in another and a better world than this.

I come now to exhort you to the practice of these duties ; for which I offer the following motives and arguments.

*1st*, then, One great argument for the preparation here recommended, may be drawn from the certainty of our Lord's return. This is asserted in so many passages of Scripture, that there is no room left us to doubt of it. The present mixt state of things, renders a future judgement not only probable to reason, but almost certain and necessary ; and the Apostle Paul, in the 8th chapter of his epistle to the Romans, derives a very ingenious, but substantial, argument in favour of this doctrine, from the present burdened state and weary face of the creatures: nor can any who professeth Christianity pretend to question it.—Should not this then oblige us to make ready for it? With these very eyes shall we see our Redeemer; and how shall we look him in the face, if we have been unfaithful during his absence, and lived at random, as if  
none

none had power over us? Nay, methinks this very consideration, that he is now removed from us, should work upon our ingenuity, and excite us to the utmost care and diligence in his service. Every one will be doing while he sees the master present: the test of fidelity is, to mind the master's interest when he is at a distance; especially the interest of such a Master, who hath bought us from the most deplorable slavery with his own precious blood, and requires nothing at our hand, but what tends to make us happy here, and to fit us for eternal glory hereafter.

*2dly*, The uncertainty of the time of his coming, should excite us to be always busy at our work, and in a fit posture to receive him. This argument is much insisted upon by our Saviour. He often compares his coming to that of a thief in the night, who studies secrecy, and will not give any previous notice; and this seems to be the meaning of that allusion in the 36th verse, where he likens himself to one who is attending a marriage-solemnity; because, on such occasions, people are not usually ma-

sters of their own time, which renders the season of their return to their own houses more uncertain. And if this be the case, can there be a more powerful motive to an habitual preparation?—"Behold, I come as a thief," says our Saviour, in the book of the Revelation. —"Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." Dost thou not know, O man, but that tomorrow thy Master may come to thee; or, which is the same thing, may call thee to him? and wilt thou not be busy? Show us thy security for one day, and then claim that day as thine own: but if thou canst not, how mad art thou to neglect thy business, or to leave any task unfinished, whilst it is in the power of thy hands to do it?—Especially if it be considered, in the

3<sup>d</sup> place, That when thy Master returns, thy working-time is over.—What is then unfinished, must remain so for ever. He comes to judge thee according to what thou hast done, and not to call thee to perfect thy unfinished labours: This, my brethren,

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is a most awful consideration; we are now sowing the seed for eternity, and what we sow, that shall we reap. Our Master's order is, *Occupy till I come*: that is the term; and we can neither get it protracted nor renewed; and if we be found unfaithful, dreadful shall our punishment be; and the more dreadful upon this account, that it shall be perpetual, without abatement, and without end. But as I would rather choose to allure than frighten you to your duty, I shall represent to you, as a

4<sup>th</sup> motive to a diligent preparation for your Master's coming,——The glorious advancement, and blessed reward, of the watchful servants, which is mentioned in the last part of my text: *Verily, I say unto you*. It is introduced with a strong asseveration, to denote the absolute certainty of the thing: and O, how condescending is that which follows! *He shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them*. Surely this is a reward, not of debt, but of grace; for how can the most perfect obedience merit any thing like this?—Those faithful servants shall

shall be advanced to an honour, which, were it not promised, they could not lawfully hope for.—They shall be entertained by their Master at his own table;—there shall they feast without any to disturb them. Here, indeed, whilst we are at our work, we obtain some foretastes of this heavenly banquet; but how soon is the table drawn! But it shall not be so in heaven.—Here we must eat, as the Jews did their passover, “in haste, with our loins girded, our shoes on our feet, and our staff in our hand.”——But in heaven we shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and with all our dear fellow-servants, never more to rise again. O blessed rest! O glorious society! O delightful entertainment!——But what can these words mean, *He shall gird himself, and come forth and serve them?*——Surely this cannot be literally fulfilled: yet it must have a resemblance to something that is real, otherwise it would not have been mentioned.

Thus much we know, that on that day Christ shall bestow some extraordinary marks of respect upon his servants, which “our  
“ ears



“ ears have not yet heard, neither can our  
“ hearts conceive.”

If “ there is joy in heaven over one sin-  
“ ner that repenteth,” though he is then  
only beginning his warfare, and has many  
a weary and painful step before him; if the  
prodigal is so kindly embraced upon his first  
return from feeding swine, and gets “ the  
“ wedding-ring on his finger, and the best  
“ robe put on him;” what shall be the  
faint’s honour in that day of the “ mani-  
“ festation of the sons of God !”

“ If any man serve me,” saith Christ,  
“ let him follow me; and where I am, there  
“ shall my servant be. If any man serve  
“ me, him will my Father honour.”—But  
these matters are too high for us; the glories  
of the upper world are far beyond our sight.  
—Yet surely those discoveries which have  
been imparted to us, are sufficient to invite  
our thoughts frequently thither; and espe-  
cially to excite us to the most diligent pre-  
paration for our Lord’s return, “ who is  
“ gone before to prepare a place for us, and  
“ who shall certainly come again, and re-  
“ ceive

“ ceive us unto himself, that where he is,  
“ there we may be also.”

Well, then, my dear fellow-servants, *Let our loins be girded about, and our lights always burning*; ere long our work shall be at an end, and this glorious eternal reward shall begin. “ Let us not be weary in well-  
“ doing; for in due season we shall reap, if  
“ we faint not.” Above all, let us guard against security and self-confidence; let us join prayer with our watching, depending upon him who hath said, “ My grace is  
“ sufficient for thee.”—To whom, with the Father, and the ever-blessed Spirit, one God, be glory and honour, dominion and power, for evermore. *Amen.*

## S E R M O N XIV.

I CORINTHIANS ix. 24.

—*So run that ye may obtain.*

**I**N these words, the Christian life is compared to a race, and the disciples of Jesus are warmly exhorted to press forward in their way to heaven, till they obtain the glorious prize for which they contend.

I shall therefore make it my business, in the following discourse,

*First*, To give you a general account of the race we have to run; and,

*Secondly*, To illustrate the fitness and propriety of this similitude.—After which, in the

*Third* place, I shall press the exhortation by some motives and arguments.

I need not spend much time upon the first of these particulars. In general, the race we have to run, comprehends the whole of that duty we owe to God; namely,

ly, obedience to his laws, and submission to his providence; doing what he commands, and patiently enduring whatever he is pleased to appoint. The charge which our great Master hath given us, is expressed in these words: *Occupy till I come.* All the gifts of nature, of providence, and of grace, are talents put into our hands: which must not only be carefully kept, but diligently improved, for his glory, and our own spiritual advantage; otherwise we shall be condemned, not only as slothful, but as wicked servants, and punished accordingly. “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not,” saith the Apostle James, “to him it is sin.” It is not sufficient, barely “to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts;” the grace of God doth further teach us, “to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the world;” adding one Christian grace to another, abounding more and more in the work of the Lord, till we have perfected holiness in the fear of God.—Thus extensive is the divine law, reaching to every part of our conduct, at all times, and in all places  
and

and circumstances. Where-ever we are, it speaks to us; and if our ears are open, we may continually hear its voice behind us, saying, Lo! "this is the way, walk ye "in it."

But the Christian life includes in it something more than the mere performance of duty; the cross lies in our way, and we shall never get to the end of the race, unless we take it up, and, with meekness and patience, carry it along with us.—It must be owned, indeed, that this, at the first sight, hath rather the look of a clog or encumbrance; and the Christian, while under the cross, is very apt to think so: he feels his burden, and, in his own apprehension, moves so heavily, that he is afraid he shall never get to the end of his journey; which frequently inclines him to wish, that the load were removed, and some easier piece of service assigned him. But this in reality is a mistake: the cross is far from being a hindrance in our way to heaven; for though a heavy material load oppresses the body, yet in the spiritual race it often happens, that the bur-  
dened

dened soul makes both the swiftest and the surest progress. "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope."—The cross may be called a tree both of knowledge and of life: the fruit it bears hath no deadly quality; on the contrary, it gives both sight and health; it opens our eyes to see the good we ought to choose, and the evil we ought to shun; and is often made effectual, by the blessing of God, to purge away those fatal distempers which sin hath brought into our frame, to beget in us a loathing of every thing that is evil, and more ardent desires after higher measures of that holiness, which is at once the ornament and the happiness of our nature. — The cross doth not enfeeble us, though we erroneously may think so; it only makes us sensible of our weakness, that we may depend upon him who is "the Lord our strength;" and instead of crushing us with its own weight, obligeth us to quit our hold of those real incumbrances which mar our progress, and hinder us from "running the race that is set before us."

Thus

'Thus I have given you a general view of the race we have to run. It comprehends obedience to the laws of God, and submission to his discipline; doing what he commands, and patiently enduring whatever he is pleased to inflict.—I am now, in the

*Second* place, To illustrate the fitness and propriety of this similitude; and to show, that the Christian life doth very much resemble a race in several important respects.

Thus, for example,—one in running a race must strictly observe the course that is marked out to him: he is not at liberty to choose his own ground, but must confine himself to that which the judges have agreed upon; otherwise let him run ever so fast, he can acquire no right or title to the prize. — Now here the resemblance is most exact. There is a certain limited way in which the Christian must run, emphatically called *the way of God's commandments*. This we must keep with the utmost precision, “neither turning aside” “to the right hand, nor to the left.” Mere activity will not avail us: we may

be very keen and busy; but if we are not busy according to rule, we only lose our labour: God can never accept it as a service done to him. It is absolutely necessary, that we be always in a readiness to answer that question, "Who hath required this at your hand?"—Nothing is left to our own humour or fancy: "The law of the Lord is perfect;" and it is equally dishonoured when we pretend to add to it, as when we take from it. Arbitrary rules of strictness, for which we have no warrant in the word of God, are dangerous things, and seldom fail in the issue to supplant that religion which is solid and saving. By this officious overdoing, the church of Rome grew up by degrees into that monster which it is now become; for I am fully persuaded, that all those childish superstitions, which have long been advanced above the laws of God, were first introduced, many of them with a real design, and all of them under the specious pretext, of giving aid to the divine law, and facilitating the observance of it.—I am very sensible, that the humour



mour of the present age doth not run this way: few need a caution against being "righteous over much." Nevertheless, as some serious well-meaning people may be in danger of making snares for their own consciences, by laying down rules of conduct which are not warranted by the word of God, I am hopeful that this hint may not be altogether unuseful. Let the holy Scriptures be your constant study; and what these enjoin, observe with all the care and accuracy you are capable of. Let this be your business, to find out the duty of every season; and when you have found it, then do and spare not.—Thus shall you run lawfully; and every step you make shall be an advance towards the prize.

Again; as running a race is a swift and constant progression, so ought the life of a Christian to be. "Whatever our hands find to do, we must do it with all our "might." And we need never go far off to find work; there is enough on every side of us to keep us constantly employed.—Let us not then be slothful in business, but "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."—

“ Let us never think we have already at-  
 “ tained, either are already perfect ; but  
 “ forgetting the things which are behind,  
 “ and reaching forth to those things which  
 “ are before, let us press toward the mark,  
 “ for the prize of the high calling of God  
 “ in Christ Jesus.”—“ The path of the just  
 “ is as the shining light, that shineth more  
 “ and more unto the perfect day.”——Our  
 present attainments, instead of a resting-  
 place, should only serve as a scaffolding to  
 raise us up higher ; and the nearer we ad-  
 vance to the prize, the more quick and ac-  
 celerated should our motion be. Which  
 leads me to mention another remarkable  
 property in which the Christian life resem-  
 bles a race ; namely,

That there is no gaining the prize unless  
 we hold out to the end.—It signifies no-  
 thing to start briskly, and to run fast a  
 great part of the way ; the whole ground,  
 you know, must be passed over, otherwise  
 the person is reputed not to have run at all.  
 —So it is in the Christian race. The tempo-  
 rary profession, or practice of religion, will  
 not avail us ; we must persevere to the last ;  
 for

for it is only he who endureth to the end that shall be saved: "To him that overcometh," said our blessed Lord, "will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." The charge, as I formerly observed to you, runs in these words; "Occupy till I come:" And the promise exactly corresponds to it; "Be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

Thus, in all these particulars, the Christian life may, with great propriety, be compared to a race.—But then it is necessary to observe, that though the resemblance is sufficiently strong to justify the use of this figurative representation; yet there are several important respects in which the Christian race doth widely differ from all others;—Such as,

*1st*, In other races, though many may start, and hold out to the end; yet none but the foremost receiveth the prize: *Know ye not*, saith the Apostle, in the first part of the verse, *that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize*; whereas it is

quite otherwise in the Christian race. There may be a great disparity among the candidates, but every one who endureth to the end shall be saved.—He who is faithful over a little, shall be as certainly rewarded, as he who is faithful over much; each shall (receive a crown as large as he can wear: ) Whosoever doth faithfully, is accounted by the Judge to have done well: for we find the same salutation that was addressed to the servant who had improved the many talents, addressed likewise to him who had improved the few: “Well done,” (though not so much done,) yet still it is said, “Well done, “thou good and faithful servant; enter thou “into the joy of thy Lord.”——Hence,

*2dly*, They who run in the Christian race have no envy, no jealousy, among themselves; far less do they molest and hinder one another: on the contrary, the stronger help forward the weaker, and give them all the assistance and encouragement in their power.—Now, in other races it is not so; the fall of one candidate gives joy to the rest; but they who run for the heavenly prize, would carry all the world along with them

if they could. As the Psalmist “ was glad  
“ when they said unto him, Let us go into  
“ the house of the Lord ;” so every sin-  
cere candidate for immortal glory, rejoiceth  
when he hears of many travellers by the  
way ; and is ready to say to every one he  
meets, O come and let us go together to the  
Zion above, that city of the great King,  
where true riches and honours are only to  
be found.

3<sup>dly</sup>, They who run in other races have  
nothing but toil and labour till they obtain  
the prize ; but in the Christian race, the  
exercise itself carries part of the reward in  
its bosom : “ Wisdom’s ways are ways of  
“ pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”  
Christ’s yoke is easy, his burden is light,  
and his commandments are not grievous.  
Hear what holy David says, “ Thy statutes  
“ have been my songs in the house of my  
“ pilgrimage.” — Sometimes, indeed, they  
have dark nights and stormy weather ;  
“ without are fightings, and within are  
“ fears.” But this is not the constant fare  
of them all, nor perhaps of any of them at  
all times : they have their seasons of joy as

well as of grief; and they have this to comfort them amidst all their troubles, even the assurance that they shall work together for their everlasting benefit. Which leads me to mention a

*4th* distinguishing property of the Christian race; namely, the certainty of gaining the prize at last. Did the Christian run in his own strength, he might not only doubt, but despair of success: but his whole dependence is on that almighty Saviour, upon whom the Father hath laid his help: He goes up through the wilderness, "leaning upon the beloved;" and therefore, under his felt weakness, and when every thing around him wears the most discouraging aspect, he is sometimes enabled to triumph in the language of Paul, and to say, as he did, "I can do all things thro' Christ that strengtheneth me."——Perseverance is not only the duty, but the privilege of all who set themselves in good earnest to run for heaven: and though the law of God obligeth them, and the new nature habitually inclines them, "to keep *us* under the body, and to bring it into "subjection;"

“ subjection ;” yet they have far better security than any efforts of their own. Omnipotence is their guardian ; and they are “ kept by the power of God, through faith “ unto salvation.” These, my brethren, are some of the endearing peculiarities of the Christian race : Let me now exhort you, in the

*Third place, So to run that you may at length obtain.*—And, for this end, let us consider,

*1st,* That many eyes are upon us :—We are surrounded with spectators, who narrowly observe every part of our behaviour. —The holy angels, those ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, look on us with a friendly concern ; and as they rejoice at the first conversion of a sinner, so we may reasonably suppose, that all our strayings from the path of life, are sorrowfully remarked and lamented by them. On the other hand, those malignant powers of darkness, which constantly go about “ seeking whom “ they may devour,” are no less attentive

to

to our conduct.—They too mark our steps, though from a different principle: not to help, but to ensnare us; not to applaud our fidelity and diligence, but to find matter of censure and accusation against us.—Above all, the great and omniscient God hath his eye continually upon us; “ he compasseth  
“ our path, and he is acquainted with all  
“ our ways.”—He besets us behind and before, and so holds us by his right hand, that we cannot fly from his presence, nor find any covering so thick as to hide us from his sight. Think of this, my brethren, and judge whether we have not cause to be continually on our guard. We perform every action, not only in the sight of innumerable witnesses, but in the presence of that glorious Being, by whom our final doom shall be pronounced: Ought we not then to quit ourselves like men?—There is something in this motive so awful, and at the same time so animating, that I should think I affronted your reason, if I spent time in the illustration of it. We must feel its influence as soon as it is named:—Did we see with our bodily eyes what we all profess



profess to believe, we should not wait for an exhortation to “run the race set before us.”

Consider, in the 2<sup>d</sup> place, That many have already run this race, who are now in possession of the glorious prize.—Paul exhorted the Christians in his day to be “followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” The way to heaven was not then an untrodden path; a great cloud of witnesses had passed that road before the Apostle began to write: and we may reasonably conclude, that vast multitudes have been following them during the seventeen hundred years which have elapsed since that time.—And shall not their example encourage us to go and do likewise? We see plainly from their success, that there are no unsurmountable obstacles in the way. The saints now in heaven were once in the same condition with ourselves; they were men of like passions, and exposed to the same temptations. The grace that saved them is equally sufficient to save us; and (glory to God) it is as ready to be dispensed

dispensed to us, if we ask and seek, and knock for it, as they did.

Where are all those illustrious persons recorded in Scripture? — Where are the patriarchs, the prophets, and the apostles of our Lord? — Where are those heroic spirits, of whom we read in the 11th chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, “ who through faith  
 “ subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness,  
 “ obtained promises, stopped the mouths  
 “ of lions, quenched the violence of fire,  
 “ escaped the edge of the sword, out of  
 “ weakness were made strong, waxed valiant  
 “ in fight, and turned to flight the armies  
 “ of the aliens ?” — Where are those faithful martyrs, “ who had trial of cruel mockings,  
 “ and scourgings, yea moreover of bonds  
 “ and imprisonment ; who were stoned, who  
 “ were sawn asunder, who were tempted,  
 “ who were slain with the sword ; who  
 “ wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-  
 “ skins, being destitute, afflicted, torment-  
 “ ed ; of whom the world was not worthy ?”  
 — Where are those holy souls, with whom we ourselves were personally acquainted, and whom we dearly loved, but who are

now

now separated from our society, and have left us behind them in this vale of misery and tears?—They are surrounding the throne of God most high, singing the song of Moses, and of the Lamb; ascribing glory to him who washed them from their sins in his own blood, and made them kings and priests unto God, even his Father.—Look above you, O Christians! to this glorious company; and the desire of being one day joined to them, will reconcile you to all the hardships of the Christian course, and make you run with patience the race set before you.

Consider, in the 3<sup>d</sup> place, Who are your fellow-travellers.—You are not only going to a glorious and triumphant society, but you go in company with persons of the greatest dignity and worth, “even the saints, those excellent ones in the earth,” whom God hath chosen and set apart for himself.—And this, my brethren, is an encouraging circumstance. We find, that even an Elias, when he supposed himself alone by the way, both wished and prayed for death, saying, “It is enough, now, O  
“ Lord

“ Lord God ; take away my life ; for I  
“ am not better than my fathers.”—And  
therefore God was pleased, in great conde-  
scension, to rectify the mistake of his ser-  
vant, by assuring him, that there were  
many thousands unknown to him, who  
had not bowed the knee to Baal ; and that  
the road to the celestial country, even in  
that corrupt and degenerate age, was not  
so unfrequented and solitary as he imagi-  
ned. The saints are not only hid from  
the world, but frequently mistaken by one  
another ; which tempts many of them to  
think, that the kingdom of Christ is of  
a very narrow extent, and the number of  
his subjects exceeding small : but were our  
eyes opened, and the scales of pride and  
prejudice removed, we should see a far  
more goodly company than we expected.—  
And ought not this to animate us in our  
Christian race ? Have we all the saints on  
earth for our companions ? are we going  
to saints and angels in heaven ? and shall  
not this fire us with an heroic ardour *to*  
*run so as we may at length obtain ?* Espe-  
cially if we consider, in the

*4th* place, The nature of those duties which our Lord hath required of us;—or if you please, (to keep by the allusion), the goodness of that road in which we are to run for the heavenly prize.—“The law is holy,” saith the Apostle Paul, “the commandment is holy, just, and good:” not only infinitely reasonable in itself, but infinitely kind and obliging to us, inasmuch as it enjoins nothing but what tends to purify and perfect our natures, and to qualify us for the enjoyment of a never-ending felicity.—In the frame of the moral law, God appears rather like a father than a sovereign, exacting nothing as a test of our subjection to his authority, but what is so necessarily connected with our own true happiness, that a liberty to act otherwise would in reality be a licence to destroy ourselves.

*5thly*, We have a kind sympathizing and unerring Guide, who came from heaven to earth to teach us the way from earth to heaven:—yea, he hath not only pointed out the road to us, but hath actually gone before us, and now calls upon us to follow his

his steps. — “ Behold,” saith God by the Prophet Isaiah, “ I have given him for a  
 “ witness to the people, a leader and com-  
 “ mander to the people.” — This is the peculiar office of our Lord Jesus Christ; and his mildness and condescension in the discharge of this office, are beautifully described by the same prophet: “ He shall  
 “ feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall  
 “ gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead  
 “ those that are with young.” — He doth not despise the weakness of his people; for he knoweth their frame, and “ is touched  
 “ with a feeling of their infirmities, having been in all points tempted like as  
 “ they are.” Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth those that fear him. “ He doth not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax;” on the contrary, “ he giveth power to the  
 “ faint, and to them that have no might  
 “ he increaseth strength.” — He will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able; but in the emphatical language of holy writ, “ he debates with them in  
 “ measure,

“measure, and flays his rough wind in  
 “the day of his east wind.” When they  
 pass through the fire, and through the wa-  
 ter, he is with them: and though, for wise  
 and holy reasons, their eyes may be hold-  
 en that they cannot perceive him; yet  
 with a powerful, though invisible hand, he  
 supports and guides their weary steps; ac-  
 cording to that gracious promise, “I will  
 “bring the blind by a way that they  
 “know not, and lead them in paths which  
 “they have not known; I will make  
 “darkness light before them, and crooked  
 “ways straight. These things will I do  
 “for them, and not forsake them.”—O  
 what a joyful consideration is this! that  
 the great Captain of salvation is our Guide,  
 who can cover our head, and heal our  
 wounds; raise us up when we fall, and per-  
 fect strength in our weakness. “Fear not,”  
 says he, “for I am with thee; be not dis-  
 “mayed, for I am thy God; I will strength-  
 “en thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will  
 “uphold thee with the right hand of my  
 “righteousness.”

My *6th* and *last* motive shall be taken

from the unspeakable worth of the prize to be obtained.—This is no other than “heaven itself;” — “eternal life;” — “an exceeding and eternal weight of glory;” — “an incorruptible crown;” — “an undefiled inheritance;” — “a glory which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither can the heart of man conceive.” — “It doth not yet appear,” saith the Apostle John, “what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” Then shall we be thoroughly changed into the image of our Lord. We shall love him without measure, and praise him without end: we shall serve him without weariness, and those manifold imperfections which stain our most holy duties while on earth. Nay, our bodies being raised by the power and spirit of our Redeemer, who is the “plague of death, and the destruction of the grave,” shall be fashioned like unto his own glorious body; whose presence we shall for ever enjoy, and whose matchless love, that passeth knowledge, we shall eternally celebrate with the church of the first-born.

This,



This, my brethren, is the glorious prize for which we are called to contend. And can any thing fire our ambition if this do not?—What bustle do men make for an earthly crown, when, lo! death is at hand to pluck it off their heads, and to throw it in the dust?—and shall not we contend for a heavenly crown, a regal dignity and power, which, when once obtained, shall never be taken from us?—“ Wherefore gird up the  
“ loins of your mind, be sober, and hope  
“ to the end, for the grace that is to be  
“ brought unto you at the revelation of  
“ Jesus Christ.”—Let us henceforth “ lay  
“ aside every weight, and the sin which doth  
“ so easily beset us, and let us run with pa-  
“ tience the race that is set before us; look-  
“ ing unto Jesus, the author and finisher of  
“ our faith; who for the joy that was set  
“ before him, endured the cross, despising  
“ the shame, and is set down at the right  
“ hand of the throne of God.”—To him let our waiting eyes be continually directed; and whilst we run in obedience to his command, let us humbly and fervently address him in the words of the devout Psalmist,

with which I shall conclude:—" Unto  
" thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. O  
" my God, I trust in thee, let me not be  
" ashamed.—Shew me thy ways; Lord,  
" teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy  
" truth, and guide me; for thou art the  
" God of my salvation, on thee do I wait  
" all the day." *Amen.*

S E R-

## S E R M O N XV.

ROMANS xii. 11.

—*Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*

**I**T usually happens, saith one, that in times of peace and outward prosperity, the church, like a river whose channel is enlarged, loseth as much in depth as it gains in breadth: I wish I could not add, that the present state of the church in our own land, serves not only to illustrate the propriety of this similitude, but likewise to confirm the truth of the observation. As we have long enjoyed, in a very distinguished manner, the protection and countenance of civil authority, the number of professors is indeed greatly increased; but though the *forms* of godliness are practised by many, there is too just cause to complain, that the genuine *power* of it is felt by few. Where are the persons who make

religion their business, and apply themselves to it as the "one thing needful?" How few are to be found, who exemplify those scriptural representations of the Christian's work and duty;—"fighting the good fight of faith;"—"running with patience the race set before them;"—"pressing toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus?" — Alas! my brethren, the far greater number, if they be going forward at all, it is with such a slow and staggering pace, as can neither edify their brethren, nor yield any real comfort to themselves: "their light," instead of "shining before men," like the dim twinkling of a candle, sunk and expiring in the socket, is scarcely discernible.

For exciting such decayed and languishing Christians to "strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die," I shall at present take occasion, from the words I have read to you, *first*, to explain; and *secondly*, to recommend that *zeal of spirit*, with which the Apostle exhorteth us to *serve the Lord*.

*Zeal*

*Fervour* in general, is opposed to lukewarmness or indifference; and denotes that edge or keenness, that activity and diligence, which we commonly exert in the pursuit of any object we highly value and wish to possess. — Now the *fervour* whereof my text speaks, hath religion, or the *service of God*, for its object: Love to God is the principle, the law of God is the rule, and his glory the end, of all its operations. The *fervent* Christian is habitually on the stretch to answer the great purposes for which he was made and redeemed; his understanding is employed in searching out the mind of God, so far as it regards the conduct of his creatures; his will is firmly and resolutely determined to perform whatever shall appear to be his duty; his affections are inspired with holy life and vigour: in consequence of which, his executive powers are all ready to perform their several parts; the tongue to speak, the hands to give, or to do what is required, and the feet to run in the way of God's commandments. In short, the whole man is engaged in the

*service of God*: so that religion becomes his constant and most delightful occupation; he “strives” with all his might “to enter in at the strait gate;” and counts nothing too much to be done, or too hard to be endured, for the enjoyment of that God whom he most ardently loves, and to whom he is entirely devoted.—This, my brethren, is to be *fervent in spirit*.

But as there are several counterfeits of this gracious temper, I shall endeavour to select those peculiar properties of true Christian *fermour*, that chiefly distinguish it from those delusive appearances by which too many impose both upon themselves and others.—Let it be observed then, in the

1<sup>st</sup> place, That as *the service of God* is the proper object of true Christian *fermour*, this renders it necessary that we be thoroughly acquainted with the laws of God, that we may know what particular services he requires of us, and will accept at our hands. A mistake here is of the most dangerous consequence: for if once we step aside from the path of duty, the faster we run, the farther

farther we depart from the right way, and our return to it becomes the more uncertain and difficult. Saul was very *fervent in spirit*, when he “breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,” and “verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth:” And yet this *feravour* of his, had not sovereign grace stopped him in his mad career, would only have hurried him downward to that hot and dark place from whence it most certainly sprung.—We have heard of some who, according to our Saviour’s prediction, “thought they did God service when they killed his people;” and the church of Rome continues at this day to afford an awful instance of this kind, whose *burning zeal*, as indeed it may literally be called, hath already consumed all that was mortal of some millions of faints; and yet, instead of being quenched by such a deluge of blood, doth still blaze out as fiercely as ever, where it is not controlled by superior force.—I have quoted these strong examples for illustrating the difference betwixt true Christian *feravour*,  
and

and that eagerness of spirit which frequently usurps its name; and to make you sensible how necessary it is that we study the “good and perfect will of God,” for directing our zeal, and confining it to that sphere in which it may and ought to move.

2dly, As our *fervour* should be employed in the *service of God*, or in those duties that God hath plainly commanded; so it ought likewise to aim at his glory; otherwise it is an unhallowed passion, which corrupteth and debaseth every thing that proceeds from it.—The want of a right aim appears to have been the principal error of the scribes and Pharisees; for most of our Saviour’s reproofs evidently turn upon this very thing. They prayed, they fasted, they gave alms, and “compassed sea and land,” to gain profelytes to the Jewish religion; all which were very commendable in their own nature:—But herein lay their fault: They did all “to be seen of men;” popular applause, and the advancement of their own interest, were the ends they aimed at; not the approbation of God, nor the advancement of his honour and interest in the world.—

Thus



Thus it often happens, when religion is in credit, that many use it as a political engine for helping them up into a higher place, and appear very warm in professing their regard to it; but no sooner is that carnal fuel withdrawn, than the flame expires, or perhaps is carried over to the opposite side, and burns as fiercely against religion, as ever it seemed to do for it.—Whereas true Christian *zeal* carries the person beyond himself to that God whom he adores; and instead of being cooled by the profane mockery, or hatred, or persecution, of wicked men, it rather becomes more vigorous and active, and exerts itself in proportion to the opposition it meets with. If God is glorified by his sufferings, the *zealous* Christian hath gained his end: like David, he is willing to be still “more vile,” still more afflicted; and with the Apostle Paul, he hath no higher ambition, than that “Christ may be magnified in his body, whether it be by life or by death.” Which leads me to observe, in the

3<sup>d</sup> place, That this gracious temper extends its regards to all God’s commandments.

ments. It declines no duty that bears the stamp of his authority: for as the glory of God is the great scope of all its actings, whatever tends to promote that, immediately becomes the object of its choice, and the matter of its most delightful and vigorous exercise. Now here the hypocrite is always found halting; he picks out the easiest parts of duty, such as have least of self-denial in them, and most of that outward splendor which attracts the observation of others. If he is rich, he may abound in alms-deeds, especially in those instances of charity which are most likely to make a noise in the world, that his fame may spread abroad, and bring him the tribute of praise from afar. He may attend upon the public ordinances of religion, and sit like one of the people of God, with a becoming air of warm devotion: but could your eye follow him into his own house, you should there behold a wonderful alteration, perhaps a total neglect both of family and secret prayer, or at best such a cold and lifeless worship, as scarcely deserved the name of "bodily exercise" itself. Whereas the upright Christian "is in the  
" fear

“fear of the Lord all the day long.” He confiders his Judge as evermore present with him : this awakens his mind, and enlivens his devotion, and hath a more powerful influence upon his conduct, than the applause or censure of ten thousand worlds : this makes him fervent in every part of duty ; yea as fervent in the severest acts of self-denial, as in those instances of obedience which are accompanied with the most immediate advantage or pleasure.—A

*4th* distinguishing property of true Christian *fervour* is this : It will make us peculiarly attentive to our own behaviour, and begin with correcting what is faulty in ourselves.—Many exclaim against the vices of others, who are extremely partial and indulgent to their own. To such our Apostle addresses a very sharp reproof, in the second chapter of this epistle, at the beginning : “Therefore, thou art inexcusable, “O man, whosoever thou art that judgest : “for wherein thou judgest another, thou “condemnest thyself ; for thou that judgest, dost the same things.—And think- “est thou this, O man, that judgest them  
“ which

“ which do such things, and dost the same,  
 “ that thou shalt escape the judgement of  
 “ God?”—Nothing can be more disin-  
 genuous, than for people to profess a hatred  
 of sin, and a mighty anxiety to have others  
 reclaimed from it, when their own conduct  
 proclaims that they do not hate it in them-  
 selves. That *zeal* which is of the right  
 kind, will first “ cast out the beam out of  
 “ our own eye,” before it will suffer us to  
 “ behold the mote that is in our brother’s  
 “ eye.” It will discover to us so many  
 things amiss in our own vineyards, that we  
 shall neither find leisure nor inclination to  
 pry officiously into our neighbour’s vine-  
 yard, till these are amended. The *zealous*  
 Christian will take no rest, till the enemies  
 of his God be subdued within his own  
 breast: “ He will never think that he hath  
 “ already attained, either is already perfect;  
 “ but forgetting the things which are be-  
 “ hind, and reaching forth unto those things  
 “ which are before, he will press toward  
 “ the mark, for the prize of the high call-  
 “ ing of God in Christ Jesus;”—“ giving all  
 “ diligence to make his calling and election  
 “ sure;”

“ sure ;” — and “ working out his own salvation with fear and trembling.” — Nevertheless, in the

5th place, Though true *fervour* begins at home, yet it is not always confined there. It was the speech of a wicked Cain, “ Am I “ my brother’s keeper ?” The warm-hearted Christian extends his good offices to all around him ; and useth all that power and influence which his station gives him, to discourage vice, and to advance the kingdom of Christ in the world. — Is he a magistrate ? he will not “ bear the sword in vain,” but faithfully employ it for the terror of evil doers, and the protection of those that do well. — Is he a minister ? he will not “ handle the word of God deceitfully ;” but, without regarding the persons or passions of men, he will openly declare the whole counsel of God, and, by sound doctrine and good example, do what in him lieth to convince and reclaim the workers of iniquity, “ that they may recover themselves “ out of the snare of the devil, who are “ taken captive by him at his pleasure.” — Is he a parent or master ? “ he will walk “ within

“ within his house with a perfect heart,” and adopt the resolution of Holy David, (*Psal.* ci. 6, 7.) “ He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me; he that worketh deceit, shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight.” In short, whatever be his condition in life, he will embrace every opportunity that Providence affords him, of advancing the glory of God, and doing all the good he can, either to the souls or bodies of men.—Of this we have many eminent examples recorded in Scripture:—Righteous Lot was vexed from day to day with the unlawful deeds and filthy conversation of the Sodomites, among whom he lived; “ Paul’s spirit was stirred in him” when he beheld the city of Athens wholly given to idolatry; and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, was both commended and rewarded, for executing righteous judgement in the camp of Israel, and obtained “ the covenant of an everlasting priesthood;” for this exprefs reason, *Because he was zealous for his God.*—But then I must add, in the

6th and last place, That this *fervour* must be always under the direction of Christian prudence, that it may not break out into indecent heats, and carry us beyond the limits of our office or station in the society to which we belong.—If we step out of our proper sphere, we trespass against that subordination which the providence of God hath established; and no pretence to religious zeal can justify our conduct. Such fervour is not inspired by the Spirit of grace, but is the *strange* and unhallowed *fire* of disorderly passion; which can never find acceptance with that God, whose declared will it is, “that all things should be done decently, and in order.”

Such, my brethren, is that *fervour of spirit* with which the Apostle exhorteth us to *serve the Lord*.

To recommend and enforce this gracious temper, was the *second* thing proposed in the method.—And now that I am to enter upon this part of the subject, I would earnestly intreat your most serious attention. Consider that I speak not only *before you*,

but *to* you ; and that not in my own name, but in the name of that glorious Person “ by whom God will judge the world in “ righteousness ; whereof he hath given as- “ surance unto all men, in that he raised “ him from the dead.” That you may be ready for that awful trial, and appear with humble boldness in his presence, when careless and trifling sinners shall hang their heads, and stand speechless and self-condemned before his tremendous throne ; this is the errand upon which I come to you ; no other, no lower errand than this. — If the bare title of Christians would gain you admittance into the heavenly glory ; if a cold and barren profession of religion, or the practice of some easy and common duties, would render you meet for the inheritance of the saints in light ; if God deserved or required no more, than what the world and the flesh can spare ; I should be indiscreet for attempting to disturb your repose. — But if these things be otherwise ; if it shall profit us nothing to “ call Christ “ Lord, Lord,” unless we “ do the things “ which he saith ;” if *sloth* be accounted *wickedness*



*wickedness* by the righteous Judge of all the earth, and as such shall be punished by him in the great day of retribution; then I should be unfaithful to God, and cruel to your souls, if I did not summon you to your duty, and vehemently urge you, in the words of my text, to *be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*—Consider, in the

1<sup>st</sup> place, That God deserves the most zealous and active service we can pay to him. Surely this assertion doth not require a formal proof; the evidence of its truth is so plain and obvious, that the most simple and illiterate must perceive it at once.—Dare any of you say that it is possible to render unto God more than you owe him? If you should, I need not go far for arguments to confute you; I can fetch them from yourselves, from every member of your bodies, from every faculty of your souls.—Who made thee, O man? This is the first question that children are taught to answer; though, alas! it is to be feared that many grown people answer it like children, and need to be sent to school again to learn its meaning. Is God thy Creator?

was it he who “ clothed thee with skin  
“ and flesh, and fenced thee with bones  
“ and sinews ? ” was it he who breathed  
into thy nostrils the breath of life, and  
made thee a living soul ? Are all the endow-  
ments of thy mind, thy understanding, thy  
memory, thy will, and thy affections ; are  
all these the fruits of his bounty ? Doth his  
merciful visitation every moment preserve  
thy spirit, keep thy body from the dust,  
and thy soul from the place of anguish and  
despair ? — And after all, is it possible,  
that thy soul or thy body can exceed in  
his service, or be employed with too much  
zeal for his honour ? Stand forth, O man !  
and reply if thou canst. What ! doth this  
plain, I had almost called it this childish,  
question put thee to a stand ? How inex-  
cusable then is thy sloth ? How just, and,  
Oh ! how dreadful, must thy condemnation  
be ?

But, my brethren, these are not all the  
mercies you have received, and are daily  
receiving from God. He is not only your  
Creator, your Preserver, and Benefactor ;  
but he hath bound you to his service by  
the

the still more endearing ties of redeeming grace and love: He sent his own Son into the world to save you, to save you by his death: Amazing goodness! to shed his blood for the expiation of your guilt: And can you exceed in your gratitude to such a friend? is it possible you can render unto him more than is due, or serve him with too great zeal and *fervour*?

But, *2dly*, God not only deserves such service as I am pleading for; he likewise demands it, peremptorily demands it, and will not be put off with any thing less.—  
 “Be not deceived,” saith this holy Apostle,  
 “God is not mocked; for whatsoever a  
 “man soweth, that shall he also reap: he  
 “that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh  
 “reap corruption; and he that soweth to  
 “the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life  
 “everlasting.” If any imagine that Christ  
 came into the world to relax their obligations to a holy life, they are grossly mistaken; and if they act upon that principle, they shall find themselves fatally disappointed at last. St Paul knew of no such indulgence, when he wrote to Titus,

that “ the grace of God, which bringeth  
“ falvation, teacheth us, that denying un-  
“ godlinefs and worldly lufts, we fhould  
“ live foberly, righteoufly, and godly in  
“ this prefent world.”——Our Saviour  
gave countenance to no fuch opinion,  
when he exhorted his difciples to “ ftrive  
“ to enter in at the ftrait gate;” and told  
them in plain and awful terms, that “ ex-  
“ cept their righteoufnefs fhould exceed  
“ the righteoufnefs of the fcribes and Pha-  
“ rifees, they fhould in no cafe enter in-  
“ to the kingdom of heaven.” This, my  
brethren, is the uniform language of holy  
writ; the words of my text are clear and  
ftrong; and it deferves our notice, that  
they are part of an epiftle wherein the  
grace of the new covenant is moft accu-  
rately defcribed, and zealoufly defended;  
which, no doubt, muft add a confiderable  
weight to them.——The flothful profeffor  
counteracts the whole defign of the go-  
fpel; for the plan of man’s redemption  
was fo wifely laid, that not only the com-  
fort of the Christian, but his improvement  
in holinefs alfo, fhould be gradually ad-  
vanced

vanced to full maturity. The design of Christ's death was not merely to reconcile God to us, but likewise to reconcile us to God; that his generous and unmerited love might overcome our enmity, make us ashamed of our ingratitude, and powerfully "constrain us to live, not unto ourselves, "but unto him who died for us, and rose "again."—A

*4th* motive to *fervour* and diligence in *the service of God*, ariseth from the difficulties that attend our duty. The Christian's work is compared to a warfare; he must dispute every inch of ground, and fight his way through surrounding enemies. It is no easy matter "to pluck out "a right eye, and to cut off a right hand;" that is, to renounce those sins to which we have been so long habituated, that they are in a manner become parts of ourselves, and no less dear to us than the most useful and necessary members of our body: yet to this we must consent before we can enter into the kingdom of heaven.—It appears a hard command that God gave to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only

“ son Isaac, whom thou lovest; and get  
“ thee into the land of Moriah, and offer  
“ him there for a burnt-offering, upon  
“ one of the mountains that I shall tell  
“ thee of.” But is not that other com-  
mand at least equally severe, Take now  
thy lust, thy beloved lust, from which thou  
hast promised thyself the greatest returns  
of profit or pleasure, bring it hither imme-  
diately, and slay it before me, without the  
ceremony of one parting embrace? This,  
my brethren, is difficult work indeed. I-  
saac lay meekly and patiently on the altar:  
but so will not our lusts; no, they will  
struggle, and cry, and plead for mercy,  
and use every insinuating method of ad-  
dress, to prevent, or at least to retard the  
stroke.—But neither is this all: those  
inward corruptions, formidable as they are,  
yet are they not the only enemies we have  
to grapple with: The devil is an adversary  
both cunning and strong, very formidable  
by his power, as “ the roaring lion;” but  
still more formidable by his craft, as that  
“ old serpent,” who can vary his shape,  
and put on the appearance of an angel of  
light,

light, that, in a form so specious, he may get access to our hearts with greater ease, and fill them with his poison, before we are aware.—This earth too upon which we tread is full of snares: and every state or condition of life hath some temptation or other peculiar to itself, as we learn from that well conceived prayer of Agur, (*Prov.* xxx. 8, 9.), “Remove far from me vanity  
“ and lies; give me neither poverty, nor  
“ riches, feed me with food convenient  
“ for me: *lest I be full, and deny thee,* and  
“ say, who is the Lord? or *lest I be poor,*  
“ *and steal,* and take the name of my God  
“ in vain.”—Besides, in the ordinary course of events, “all that will live godly in  
“ Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution” in one kind or other. The Christian is bound not only to avoid conformity to the world, but, on all proper occasions, to testify his dislike of its corrupt maxims and practices; which cannot fail to draw upon him a considerable share of hatred and resentment. Singularity is enough to beget ill will: but if a person shall not only use different manners, but likewise condemn the  
the

the manners of those among whom he lives, which the most prudent and modest disciple of Jesus may sometimes find himself obliged to do; this will not easily be forgiven: such a one can expect no better treatment than Lot had from the Sodomites, who could not bear that a fellow, as they called him, “ who came in to sojourn,” should pretend to be their judge. — Such are the difficulties that attend religion; and do not these make zeal or *fervour* necessary! — I shall only add, in the

4<sup>th</sup> place, That we should *be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*; because, as I have already observed, it is absolutely impossible that we can do too much. Were we in any danger of exceeding, there would no doubt be cause to moderate our zeal: but this is not the case; for after “ we have done all those things which are commanded us,” we shall still have reason to say, “ We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.” — True it is, that in particular exercises of religion, there may be an

over-



overdoing; for one duty may justly be said to exceed, when it thrusts out another of greater, or even of equal importance, or which is more the duty of the season than itself; but so long as we regulate our services by the word of God, in which case alone they are proper acts of obedience, we need not be afraid of becoming "righteous overmuch." One thing is certain, that the most serious Christians, when they came to die, have always lamented their former negligence: and the time is at hand, when all the world shall confess, that holy diligence was the truest wisdom; and that they, and they only, made choice of the better part, who minded the "one thing needful," and were *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*.

AND now, my dear friends, my design upon the whole, is to excite you to a proper concern about the salvation of your precious and immortal souls. It is not a system of opinions that will carry any man to heaven: our knowledge of the truth shall only serve to condemn us, if we do  
not

not receive the truth into our hearts, and suffer it to influence both our temper and practice. I am far from thinking that men may be saved in any religion, however false, provided only they be sincere in the belief, and obedient to the dictates, of that religion they profess; but of this I am fully persuaded, on the other hand, that no religion can save a man who is not serious in it, and who doth not yield himself entirely to its government. Can it avail us any thing, that we profess the *true* religion, if we ourselves are *false* to that religion? No, surely: The religion indeed is good, but it is not *our* religion; it is our book that contains the true religion, but not our heart; and therefore it can no more save us, than the best food can nourish us, and preserve our life, which only standeth upon the table, or which never goeth farther than our mouth.

Let me therefore intreat you to comply with the Apostle's exhortation in my text. I speak to you who are Christians *indeed*; because you alone are in a capacity of *serv-  
ing the Lord*; for "they that are in the  
"flesh,"

“flesh,” who were never cut off from the natural stock, and ingrafted into Christ the true vine, such persons, the Apostle tells us, (*Rom. viii. 8.*) “cannot please God.” They may perform the outward acts of duty, they may even do them with a considerable degree of *natural fervour*; but all the while their most specious services are only “dead works,” offered up with “strange fire,” which cannot ascend to God with acceptance.—I speak therefore to the living members of Christ, to those who are regenerated by the Spirit of God; and my request to you is, that, from this time forward, you should “stir up the gift of God that is in you,” and be *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*

The declining interest of religion requires all the support you can give it. Men are wearing out of acquaintance with God; nor is it greatly to be wondered at, seeing his image is so faintly to be discerned, even upon those who are really his children. Look around you, and observe how active and violent wicked men are in the service of Satan; their pace, like “the driving  
“ of

“ of Jehu, the fon of Nimshi, is fwift and  
“ furious.” With what zeal, with what  
carefulnefs, with what felf-denial,—I had  
almost faid, with what fear and trembling,  
—do many of them work out their own  
damnation! “ drawing iniquity with cords  
“ of vanity, and finning as with a cart-  
“ rope!”—And will you be cold and negli-  
gent, nay, timorous and fhamefaced, in the  
fervice of the true and living God? Oh!  
how unfeemly, how fcandalous, how hurt-  
ful were this! hurtful to yourfelves, hurt-  
ful to your fellow Christians, hurtful even  
to the wicked with whom you converfe:  
they know that heaven and hell are in di-  
rect oppofition, and confequently that the  
roads which lead to them muft be widely  
diftant from each other; and therefore they  
will never be perfuaded that they fhall be  
thruft down into utter darknefs, if fuch as  
you, who in appearance are treading the  
fame path that they do, fhall get to hea-  
ven at laft.—Ungrateful fervants! how  
hath your Redeemer deferved this at your  
hands? Is this the way to gain mens  
hearts to the love of holinefs? Would you  
wifh

with the world to write after so imperfect and blotted a copy as you set before them? I beseech, I obtest you, by all the regard you have for the glory of God, your own comfort, and the good of others, that henceforth you would distinguish yourselves more visibly from “the men of the world, who have their portion in this life.” — “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” Let Christianity be so deeply engraved on every part of your conduct, that he who runs may read whose servants you are, and thus God may be glorified in his saints. — It is a mean inglorious aim, merely to keep within the limits which divide the lawful from the forbidden ground: Show that you are men of “another spirit,” by “following the Lord fully,” and straining every nerve, as it were, to attain the highest perfection of which our nature is capable in its present imperfect state. Let faith realise to you the life of Jesus; and beg of God, for Christ’s sake, that he, by his Spirit, may kindle that holy fire in your hearts,  
which

which shall gradually consume all your dross, and carry you swiftly forward to the Zion above, that imperial city of the great King, where, like those flaming ministers who surround his throne, you shall serve God day and night in his temple, without interruption, without imperfection, and without weariness. To which exalted felicity, may God, of his infinite mercy, bring us all in due time, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Amen.*

S E R-

## S E R M O N XVI.

NUMBERS xiv. 24.

*But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath FOLLOWED ME FULLY; him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.*

**I** PROPOSE to recommend to your imitation this illustrious servant of the Most High God, whose name is recorded with such distinguished honour in the passage I have just now read in your hearing. *Caleb followed the Lord fully*, and obtained a glorious reward: and if we hope or wish to be rewarded as he was, reason teacheth us, that we should walk in his steps, and do as he did.

But what are we to understand by *following the Lord fully*?—This question is first in order; and after I have endeavoured to give a satisfying answer to it, I shall then proceed to press the duty by some motives and arguments.

LET us begin with inquiring what we are to understand by *following the Lord fully*.

And here I must observe in the entrance, that no man can *follow the Lord* at all, till once he be acquainted with him: "For he  
" that cometh to God, must believe that he  
" is, and that he is a rewarder of them that  
" diligently seek him." A slavish reluctant subjection there may be; but there cannot be a voluntary, far less an unreserved, obedience, without affectionate trust and filial confidence. Before we can *follow God*, we must not only know that he is supreme, and hath a *right* to command; but we must likewise believe, that he is *worthy* to command, and infinitely possessed of all those perfections which qualify him to govern the creatures he hath made. Two things we must be thoroughly persuaded of? *first*, That the laws of our Sovereign are righteous and good; and, *next*, That he is both able and willing to protect us in his service.—And indeed, my brethren, had we never offended God, these views alone would have been sufficient inducements to *follow*  
*him*



*him fully* : but as we are guilty creatures, and liable to punishment, some farther discoveries are now become necessary. We need something to vanquish those fears of wrath, which would rather prompt us to fly from the presence of our Judge, than to make an uncertain attempt to pacify him by submission : some scheme of grace must be opened to our view, by which pardon may be dispensed to the guilty, and strength imparted to the weak, in a way that appears consistent with the honour of the divine government. Nay, we must not only know that such a scheme exists, but we on our part must cordially approve of it ; and by our personal consent, ascertain our claim to that mercy and grace which it offers to sinners ; that being at peace with God, we may no longer dread him as an enemy, but love him as a Father, and serve him with joy, being assured that “ our labour shall not be “ in vain.”

This being premised, as a necessary preparative for *following the Lord fully*, the duty itself may be considered as including the following particulars :

1<sup>st</sup>, That we acknowledge no other Lord besides him. One Lord we must have ; for it is folly to imagine we can be independent and free : Man was made to serve ; and nothing is left to him but the choice of his master : But more than one Lord we cannot have ; unless by a derived or delegated authority : He who is supreme may appoint another to rule under him, and to enforce the observance of his laws ; and when both concur in the same command, then both may be served by one act of obedience : But “ no man can serve two *opposite* masters ; “ for either he will hate the one, and love “ the other ; or else he will hold to the one, “ and despise the other. We cannot serve “ God and Mammon.” And therefore to *follow the Lord fully*, is to follow him *only* : It is to make his will the sole and absolute rule of our conduct, in opposition to our own humour, the temptations of Satan, and the corrupt maxims of a world that lieth in wickedness.

2<sup>dly</sup>, To *follow the Lord fully*, is to obey him without any reserve or limitation :— it is to serve him with an affectionate and liberal

liberal heart;—and to do this at all times.—Each of these might be considered apart; but I have chosen to join them together under one head, as they serve to illustrate and support one another.

Our obedience, I say, must be without reserve or limitation; for unless we *follow the Lord* in all things, we cannot truly be said to follow him in any thing. We give cause to suspect, that when, in other instances, we perform the duties he enjoins, yet even in those we are governed by something else than a regard to his authority; and that though we seem to *follow* him, yet in reality we are prosecuting some interested scheme of our own, and are seeking ourselves, instead of serving our God. The universality of our obedience, then, is the only proof of our sincerity; for “whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all.” We do not *follow the Lord fully*, unless we follow him whithersoever he leadeth us, thro’ the most rugged paths of self-denial and mortification, as well as in those smooth delightful ways, in which we find the most

immediate advantage and pleasure.—Again, we must serve him with an affectionate and liberal heart; continually asking such questions as these: “ Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” and, “ What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?” The term *following* plainly implies this: A person may be dragged or driven against his will; but to *follow* is an act of choice: it denotes a voluntary and cheerful obedience; a service of *love*, which is not sparing or niggardly, but always deviseth liberal things. Would we then *follow the Lord fully*, we must be “ ready to every good work;” and not only embrace opportunities of service when they present themselves; but even seek out opportunities of improving those talents with which we are entrusted, that, as it is expressed in the parable, “ when our Master returns, he may receive his own with usury.”——I further added, that we should behave after this manner at all times; that our conduct on every occasion may be consistent and uniform:—The true servant of the Lord must always be *one man*, speaking the same language,

language, and observing the same conduct in every place and in every company. Which leads me to a

3<sup>d</sup>. remark of considerable importance; namely, That to *follow the Lord fully*, is to follow him openly, and in the face of the world. We must not think of stealing to heaven by some clandestine unfrequented path, as if we were ashamed of being seen, or afraid lest it should be known to what family we belonged: This is a sneaking cowardly artifice; so base in itself, and so ungrateful to the kindest, as well as to the greatest and most honourable Master, that were it not too commonly practised, one should scarcely think it needful to be mentioned.

There are two extremes into which people are apt to run, and both ought to be guarded against with equal care. — Some proclaim their religion as on the house-tops: they love to talk of their high attainments, and discover an anxiety to make themselves observable, and to gain the admiration and applause of their neighbours. This our Saviour expressly condemns, *Matth. vi.* from

the 1st to the 19th verse, where he tells his disciples, that they who fast or pray, or give alms, to be seen of men, only serve themselves: And what is the consequence? It is but just they should be left to reward themselves as they can; for duties done with such an aim can never be accepted by God as any part of that religious homage he requires.—Others again, from a false modesty and bashfulness, or perhaps a pretended dislike of ostentation and hypocrisy, run into the opposite extreme: They hide their light, (if any light they have), they hide it, I say, “under a bushel,” as the Scriptures express it. They go as great lengths as they dare, in a servile compliance with the humours and customs of the world; and even keep at an affected distance from every thing that might betray any serious impression of God upon their minds.

Now, the duty I am recommending lies at an equal distance from both these extremes. It is a profession that is neither ostentatious nor shamefaced; it neither courts observation, nor avoids it. The true *follower of the Lord*, keeping the laws of his Master continually

nually in his eye, performs every duty in its place and season. It appears “ a small matter to him to be judged of man’s judgement ;” he endeavours “ so to speak,” and so to act, “ not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth the heart.” He doth not shun the view of his fellow-creatures, but is willing to give all who choose it, an opportunity of learning from his conduct, the nature and spirit of that religion he hath embraced. He feels, and practically acknowledgeth, the divine authority of such precepts as these :—“ Let your moderation be known to all men :” —“ Provide things honest in the sight of all men :” and,—“ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” — His soul is alarmed with that awful declaration of our Saviour, (*Luke ix. 26.*) “ Who, soever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s glory, and of the holy angels.” — Would we then *follow the Lord fully*, we must confess him openly,

openly, and dare to be holy in spite of devils and men: We must “ be blameless and  
 “ harmless, the sons of God, without re-  
 “ buke, in the mids of a crooked and per-  
 “ verse nation,—holding forth the word of  
 “ life.” Once more, in the

4th place, *To follow the Lord fully*, is to cleave to him stedfastly when others forsake him; and to persevere in his service, even when it exposeth us to the world’s hatred, and the persecution of wicked and unreasonable men. — It was on account of this brave and honourable singularity, that Caleb obtained the title of a man *of another spirit*. He was one of four, among some hundred thousands, who retained his loyalty to the King of heaven: for besides Moses and Aaron, and his own companion Joshua, it doth not appear that there was one dissenting voice in all the tribes of Israel; the revolt was universal, the whole congregation rebelled against their God.—Nay, he was not only singular, but his singularity drew upon him the resentment of his brethren: Orders were given “ to stone him to death;” and they were on the point of doing it,  
 when



when “ the glory of God appearing in the “ tabernacle,” checked their fury, and protected the life of this illustrious saint.— Thus it was that Caleb *followed the Lord fully*; and thus must we also do, if we aspire to his reward. Instead of shrinking at persecution, if that should be our lot, we must rather “ rejoice that we are counted worthy “ to suffer shame” in the cause of our Lord; and even esteem it a privilege, “ that to us “ it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not “ only to believe in his name, but likewise “ to suffer for his sake.”

The amount of all I have said is this: If we would *follow the Lord fully* after the pattern in my text,—we must acknowledge no other Master besides him:—We must obey him in all things: we must do this at all times: and serve “ him with an affectionate “ and liberal heart; not grudgingly, or as “ of necessity;” for “ the Lord loveth a “ cheerful giver.”—We must follow him openly, and in the face of the sun;—and then we must persevere in our attendance upon him, though no man should join with us; nay, though earth and hell should unite  
their

their force, and both rise up in arms to oppose us.

You have now seen the aim of my discourse; and may I not hope to succeed in it? I am asking nothing that is unreasonable, nothing that you yourselves can find any pretence to refuse: All I ask is, in the

1<sup>st</sup> place, That you should be *honest men*. You call yourselves Christians: and what is my request, but that you be Christians *indeed*?— So that in reality, it is the cause of your own honour I am pleading with you. A man of spirit and integrity, is a character that universally commands esteem; but it is impossible to support that honourable character by any other means than by *following the Lord fully*. Enemies you may have; I ought rather to have said, enemies you shall have, some perhaps, perversely and maliciously, who may slander you as hypocrites: but a steadfast and uniform perseverance in holiness, if it disarm not their malice, will at length confute their reproach. Whereas your swerving from duty, either

to gain the favour of men, or to avoid their displeasure, cannot fail to expose you to their contempt and scorn: Reward you they may; but, Oh! how low must you sink in their esteem!—And then what a triumph will it give to the wicked, who only wait for your halting? How will it whet their tongues, and give them an edge that shall pierce you to the quick? for this you may lay your account with, that their censures of you shall be far more severe and unmerciful, than those they employ against others, who make no profession of religion: nay, their censures shall be more severely felt by yourselves; because you will find something within you that tells you they are just.—The hardened sinner can assume an air of confidence and intrepidity; conscience being seared, gives him no disturbance within; so that his external appearance is all he hath to attend unto: but the sense of having acted wrong, will draw your attention inward, and leave your countenance to express every outward symptom of timidity and self-reproach. Whereas, by *following the Lord fully*, you shall by degrees acquire

acquire a firmness and independency of spirit, that will enable you at all times to behave with a genuine and well-supported dignity. This shall give you an irresistible superiority over the hearts of wicked men, which shall overawe them in secret, and constrain their homage, in the same proportion that it excites their hatred and envy. Thus we read, that "Herod feared John," even when he threw him into prison; and he feared him, as St Mark informs us, purely upon this account, "because he knew " that he was a just and holy man."

*2dly,* The duty I am recommending is equally necessary to secure the inward peace and tranquillity of your minds: it contributes to your interest, no less than to your honour.—How miserable is the man who hath war and discord within his own breast! This is worse than death; for that only tears the soul from the body, whereas this tears the health, the life, from the soul itself. Such a person resembles "the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Which way soever he turns his  
eyes,

eyes, the prospect, on all hands, is dark and gloomy. Above, is the throne of an offended God; beneath, is the fire that shall never be quenched; and within, he feels the gnawings of the worm that dieth not: so that the creatures around him are his only resource; and these at best are “deceitful brooks;”—“broken cisterns, that can hold no water;”—“miserable comforters,” which delude him for a moment, and forsake him at the time when he stands most in need of them: “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”—But “light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.”——“Great peace,” said one who knew it by experience, “great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them;” even “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep their hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.”

My brethren, we shall never taste the comforts of religion, till we become thoroughly religious, and *follow the Lord* with all our heart. A half religion must always  
 be

be a joyless thing. Persons of this mixed character must in great measure be strangers to pleasure in any kind. They have just as much religion as maketh sin bitter, and as much sin as renders religion unpleasant: and what an insipid disagreeable situation must this be! — In respect of present enjoyment, the dissolute and unreserved slaves of the devil have manifestly the advantage of those half-converted people. They get a full taste, at least, of such dreggy pleasure as sin can afford; but the others cannot even get at that much, and at the same time their dry constrained formality supplies them with nothing to make up for the want of it. Whereas he who *followeth the Lord fully*, possesseth a joy infinitely superior to what the creatures can yield; nay, a joy that is altogether independent on the creatures.

Moreover, religion, when it is genuine and cordial, heightens the relish of every lawful comfort. Besides that natural sweetness which God hath put into many of the outward benefits he bestows, the true Christian can look upon them as the gifts of a  
reconciled

reconciled Father, and pledges of better things to come. He can say upon the receipt of every mercy, — This is mine, and heaven also: — My God hath sent me this token of his love, to support and encourage me in my journey homeward; I shall soon be beyond the need of such inferior blessings, and possess the living fountain from whence those refreshing streams do flow. — On the other hand, if his present allowance be scanty, he can say, — My Father knoweth what is good for me better than I do; blessed be his name, who, in kindness, with-holds from me what his wisdom foresees would prove a snare to my soul: He seeks my *whole* heart, and he is worthy to possess it: It is my business to *follow* him; and the less I am encumbered, the faster I shall run: When I get home I shall be comforted and satisfied to the full: Famine may dwell in this wilderness, but is altogether unknown in that good land to which I am travelling: “In my Father’s house there is bread enough, and to spare.” — To a person of this temper nothing can come amiss:

He knows that his lot is ordered by that God "who is wise in heart, and mighty in strength;" and who hath expressly promised, that "all things shall work together for good to them that love him, to them who are the called according to his purpose. — Distress falls with a crushing and deadly weight upon the man who steps aside from the road of duty; but he who keeps the straight and onward path, can take adversity by the cold hand, and welcome it as a friend, whose sober advice will guide him in his pilgrimage far better than the flattering lips of prosperity. He can say with the Prophet Habakkuk, when every earthly comfort takes wing and flieth away, "Although the fig-  
 " tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit  
 " be in the vines, the labour of the olives  
 " shall fail, and the fields shall yield no  
 " meat, the flock shall be cut off from the  
 " fold, and there shall be no herd in the  
 " stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I  
 " will joy in the God of my salvation." — But there are other motives besides these, which ought to have weight, and which

will



will have weight with every ingenuous heart. Let me therefore remind you, in the

3<sup>d</sup> place, That our Lord hath in some measure entrusted us with his glory, and called the world to take notice of us, as the persons by whom he expects to be honoured.—O how should this fire us with a generous ambition to excel in holiness, that we may exhibit a just representation of the Master we serve, and show that he is in truth what the Scriptures report him to be, “altogether lovely,” and “fairer  
“than the children of men!”—Is it not, my brethren, matter of grief to you, that so many are to be found who “despise  
“and reject the Saviour of mankind?” Would you not wish that all the world should know his excellence, that they might admire, and love, and choose him for their Master?—If you do, for the Lord’s sake, for your own sake, and for the sake of the many thousands to whom he still appears “without form and com-  
“liness,” do not withhold the aid you can give: Him they cannot see, but you

are always in their eye; permit them to behold his image in you.—Would you not reckon it a high crime to blaspheme him with your mouths? I know you would: O then do not blaspheme and reproach him by your actions!—Allow me to ask you,—When you go with the multitude, and live as careless sinners do, trifling away your precious time in the giddy round of fashionable amusements; how would you have the world to judge?—Would you have them to believe, that such behaviour is agreeable to the laws of your Master? that he approves of, or even that he is but slightly displeas'd with it?—What would you think of a minister who should preach in that manner, and labour to persuade his hearers, that a careless trifling dissipated life is perfectly consistent with true piety, and that any thing beyond it is unnecessary preciseness, and being “righteous overmuch?”—Sure I am, you would look upon such a minister with contempt, nay, with horror: and dare you practise what we dare not preach?—We may, we ought to say every thing  
that

that is true. We dare not preach an uncommanded strictness; there is a curse denounced against those who “add unto the words of this book,” as well as against those who “take from them.” And if your behaviour differ widely from what we are bound to recommend, I again ask the question, What judgement would you have the world to form?—They must necessarily condemn either us or you; us for requiring too much, or you for performing too little:—They must either conclude that we misrepresent the religion of Jesus, or that you are not the disciples of Jesus.—Will any of you be so candid as to take our part against yourselves, and honestly confess, that you are wholly to blame? will you go to your carnal neighbours, and tell them, that what you do is utterly inconsistent with your holy profession; that the Lord, whose name you bear, acted in a different manner himself, and gave you laws of a quite different nature and tendency?—I suspect you will hardly consent to this proposal; and yet justice demands it; nay, unless you either do

something of this kind, or alter your course of life, and *follow the Lord fully*, you are criminal in the highest degree; you slander your Master, you bear false witness against him, and are chargeable with dishonesty, with perjury, nay with blasphemy itself.—And this suggests a

4th motive, which I beg you may attend to.—I am now going to plead with you from love to your neighbours. This is a principle you profess to honour; nay, if I mistake not, the desire of obliging others, and of rendering yourselves agreeable to them, is your common apology for conforming to their manners, and avoiding the offensive singularity of *following the Lord fully*. This, my brethren, is a false expression of love; nevertheless, it discovers such a regard to others, as furnishes me with a handle to take hold of the true principle, and to plead it in support of the duty I am recommending.—Surely it is no office of love to deceive another to his hurt, or to suffer him to continue in a pleasing mistake, which unavoidably must, and which may very speedily end in his

his ruin: such “tender mercies” would indeed be “cruelty.” In the common affairs of life, this maxim is universally acknowledged: And is it less cruel to deceive your neighbour in matters of infinitely higher importance? If, by the freedoms you take, others are emboldened to sin against God; will the pretence of good-nature or courtesy be sustained as a defence against the charge of blood-guiltiness? No, my brethren. They who are thus misled by you “shall die in their iniquity;” but “their blood,” at the same time, “shall be required at your hands.”—“Wo unto the world because of offences; but, wo chiefly to him by whom the offence cometh.” Hypocrites shall have the wo of everlasting punishment, even the children of God shall have the wo of sharp rebuke and chastisement. It is dreadful to think that the souls of any should perish eternally, and we be the cause of it: surely “it were better for that man, that a millstone were hang- ed about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”—Do you then love your neighbour in sincerity?

O teach him by your example to *follow the Lord fully*. — Remember “that he who  
 “ converteth a finner from the error of his  
 “ way, shall save a soul from death, and  
 “ shall hide a multitude of sins;” and may  
 hope to be crowned with distinguished honours in that day, “when they that be  
 “ wise shall shine as the brightness of the  
 “ firmament, and they that *turn many to*  
 “ *righteousness*, as the stars for ever and  
 “ ever.”

The *5th* and *last* motive with which I shall press this important duty, is the reward that awaits those who *follow the Lord fully*. They shall possess that good land of promise, whereof the earthly Canaan was only an emblem or type. “To them who  
 “ by patient continuance in well-doing,  
 “ seek for glory, honour, and immortality, Christ shall render eternal life.” —  
 “Blessed are they that do his command-  
 “ ments, that they may have right to the  
 “ tree of life, and may enter in through  
 “ the gates into the city.” There shall they see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, who shine with such lustre in the sacred  
 records;

records; there shall they see Moses, and Aaron, and Caleb, and Joshua, with all the holy prophets and apostles of our Lord.—Nay, in heaven they shall behold, and delightfully converse with, “Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant,” who, with the price of his own blood, obtained for them a right to that undefiled inheritance, and sent forth his Spirit to prepare them for the enjoyment of it.—And shall not the prospect of such exalted felicity, animate us in our Christian course, and powerfully incite us to “be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises?—Can we suppose that any of the saints who surround the throne of God, do now repent of their self-denial and mortification, or repine because they were despised and persecuted while on earth? No, my friends;—they would not part with the feeblest ray of their present glory, for the everlasting possession of all the honours and pleasures that this earth can afford.—What shall I say more?—I have urged the most weighty motives that occurred to me; and could I think

think of any thing still more persuasive, I should add it with pleasure. But without the divine blessing, no arguments will prevail. All therefore that remains is, to turn my pleadings with you into prayers to God, that he may bestow upon you *another spirit*, and enable you by his grace *so to follow him* while here, that hereafter, in the heavenly world, you may *fully* enjoy him, through all the growing ages of a happy eternity.  
*Amen.*

S E R-



## S E R M O N XVII.

PSALM XXXIX. 12.

—*For I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.*

**H**AD these words been spoken by one of the Rechabites, who were commanded by their father Jonadab, “ That they should drink no wine, neither build houses, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyards, nor have any; but that they should dwell in tents all their days,” we might perhaps have considered them as pointing merely at the *peculiarities* of that sequestered tribe, by which they were distinguished from the rest of mankind: but as they are the words of David, who himself was a king, one of the lords of this earth, who had every inducement to magnify his office, and to make his importance appear in its utmost extent, they can lie under no suspicion of partiality; and therefore challenge the greatest regard.

It

It must indeed be acknowledged, that David wrote this Psalm under the heavy pressure of affliction; which may induce some to think, that what he saith in my text, is no other than the natural language of a dispirited man, whose mind was un-tinged and broken by adversity: but if we attend to what is written, 1 *Chron.* xxix. 15. we shall find him using the same language in the height of his prosperity: “ We are “ strangers,” said he, “ before thee, and so- “ journers, as were all our fathers; our “ days on earth are as a shadow, and there “ is none abiding.” Never did the Jewish nation appear to be more at home than at that time: As for David, his happiness was so complete, that, instead of asking any additional favours, he could hardly find words to express his gratitude for those he had already received. Yet, amidst all his affluence, when he possessed every outward comfort his heart could wish, still he called himself a *stranger* and a *sojourner* before God.

We must therefore consider the words of my text, as expressing the fixt and habitual sentiments

sentiments of David's heart. In his most prosperous condition, he did not look upon this earth as his home; but extended his views to the heavenly world, that glorious and permanent inheritance of the saints, which is "incorruptible and undefiled, and "which fadeth not away."

Among the various subjects of inquiry that might readily occur to us upon reading this passage, the two following appear to me the most interesting and profitable.

*First*, Whence is it that holy men consider themselves as *strangers and sojourners* upon earth? And,

*Secondly*, What manner of life is most expressive of this character, and best suited to the condition of *strangers and sojourners*? To these, therefore, I shall confine myself in the following discourse.

I begin with inquiring, Whence it is that holy men, while they live upon earth, consider themselves as *strangers and sojourners with God*?—And to account for this, one might declaim at great length upon the unsatisfying nature, and precarious duration, of

of every thing below the sun. I might remind you, that as we came but lately into this world, so we must shortly go out of it, and leave all our possessions to be enjoyed by others; who, in their turn, likewise shall die, and part with them. I might descend to the various calamities that embitter human life, from which none of mankind are altogether exempted; and to these I might add the peculiar sufferings of the righteous, those sharp and painful trials to which the best of men are most frequently exposed in this state of discipline. But I am unwilling to enlarge upon topics of this nature; because I would not have it thought, that the godly consider themselves as *strangers and sojourners*, solely, or even principally, for such reasons as these. They renounce the world, not because it is unfriendly to them, but because it is unfuitable: they would despise its smiles no less than its frowns; they are not violently thrust out of it, but voluntarily resign it, and leave it to those who have nothing else for their portion.—Accordingly, you may observe, that David styles himself not only a *stranger*, but a *sojourner*.

*journer*.—Every man is a stranger, who is not a native of the place where he resides : but a *sojourner* is one who maketh only a passing visit to a place, with a resolution to leave it again, and to proceed on his journey. Now, this last is the distinguishing character of the faints. — Wicked men must leave this earth, they know they must, and wish it were otherwise with all their heart ; and as they have no prospect of going to a better world, they do all they can to banish the thoughts of their removal from this, that they may relish their present enjoyments with as little alloy as possible. Whereas the godly, who are made citizens of the heavenly Jerufalem, can look forward without dismay to the time of their departure from this “ strange land,” “ knowing, that when the earthly house of this “ tabernacle shall be dissolved, they have a “ building of God, an house not made with “ hands, eternal in the heavens.” They would not choose to live here always ; they are *strangers* in affection, as well as in condition ; their hearts are elsewhere ; they  
 desire,

defire, they even long to be at home with God.

The faints juſtly account themſelves *ſtrangers* upon earth, becauſe they are regenerated by the Spirit of God; they are “born from above,” and therefore can find no place of reſt while they live at a diſtance from their native country. Every thing tends naturally to the place of its original; and grace, which came down from heaven, leads the ſoul upward to heaven from whence it came. “Whatſoever is born of “God,” ſaith the Apoſtle John, “over-  
“cometh the world.” The dry and empty huſks of earthly enjoyments, cannot ſatiſfy the deſires of a heaven-born ſpirit: upon theſe the renewed man looks down with a holy diſdain, and then liſts his longing eyes to that celeftial country, where “is fulneſs  
“of joy, and pleaſures for evermore.”—— There he knows his inheritance lies;—there dwell his kindred, to whom he ſtands in the deareſt and moſt intimate relation; “God the Judge of all, Jeſus the Mediator  
“of the new covenant, an innumerable  
“company of angels, and the ſpirits of juſt  
“men

“men made perfect.”—And there also he is to make his everlasting abode. Here he sojourns for a while, till he is rendered meet for entering into “the purchased possession;” and when the appointed season comes, he gladly removes to his Father’s house, to dwell with his God for ever and ever.

Upon these accounts, my brethren, the children of God, while they live upon earth, consider themselves as *sojourners* in a strange land. Their sentiments in this matter are not the effects of disappointment and vexation, but the conclusions of an enlightened and renewed mind: they are willing to leave this world, because they have a home to go to, where their natures shall be perfected, and all their desires satisfied to the full.—Let us now inquire, in the

*Second* place, What manner of behaviour is most expressive of this temper, and best suited to the condition of *strangers and sojourners*?—This branch of the subject opens a wide field of practical instruction, and will lead me to recommend to you some of

the most important and difficult duties of the Christian life.

*Ist*, If we look upon this earth as a strange country, through which we are only passing to our native home, it ought certainly to be our care, that we receive as little hurt in our passage as possible. This is a maxim of common prudence that no body will dispute. Now the greatest hurt the world can do us, is to make us forget the place of our destination, or loiter too much by the way: and therefore its smiles are more to be dreaded than its frowns. “The prosperity of fools,” saith Solomon, “destroyeth them.” It is difficult to possess much, and not to overlove it: Hence that caution of the Psalmist, “If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.” When our situation is so agreeable, that we find ourselves disposed to say, “Soul, take thine ease;” then indeed it is high time to look warily around us; the hook is not so curiously baited for no end. — I do not mean to disparage the bounty of Providence; if it hath pleased God to distinguish any of you by riches or honours; or to crown your  
honour



honest industry with uncommon affluence; it is certainly your duty to be thankful to that kind Benefactor, who “hath covered  
 “ your table, and made your cup to run  
 “ over.” I only mean to execute that order which was given to Timothy, “ Charge  
 “ them that are rich in this world, that  
 “ they be not high-minded, nor trust in  
 “ uncertain riches, but in the living God,  
 “ who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” I would only exhort you as Paul did the Corinthians, “ To rejoice as though you  
 “ rejoiced not; to buy as though you possessed not; and to use this world, so as not  
 “ to abuse it; because the time is short, and  
 “ the fashion of this world passeth away.” My sole aim is to remind you, that the more you have, the greater need there will be to keep a strict and jealous guard upon your hearts, lest they be debauched by those pleasing enjoyments, and alienated from God, who alone hath a right to them. — But it is not enough that we receive no hurt in our journey through this strange land; it ought likewise to be our care, in the

2d place, To make all the provision we can for that better country to which we are travelling.—The Holy Scriptures speak of “ a meetness for the inheritance of the “ saints in light;”—of “ making to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness;”—of “ providing bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not.”—In opposition to all this, we read of some, “ who make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof;”—“ whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.”—I need not inform you, which of these two are the *strangers and sojourners*. Let it be our care, my brethren, who claim this character, “ to grow in grace,” and to bring forth “ those fruits of righteousness, which are, by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” Every advance in holiness is a step that leadeth upward to the heavenly felicity: for what is glory but grace in maturity? they differ only in degree; they are the same in kind, and the one grows up and ripens into the other. Our riches  
and

and honours, though they should accompany us to the last period of life, must leave us at death: "Naked we came into the world, and naked we must return:" but holiness shall pass with us beyond the grave, and attend us home to our Father's house, there to shine with increasing brightness through all the ages of eternity.—

Do we then aspire to the heavenly state? let us endeavour to enjoy as much of heaven as we can, even while we *sojourn* in this "house of our pilgrimage." Surely "every man that hath this hope in him,"—the hope of being thoroughly changed into the "likeness of his Lord, when he shall see him as he is," at his second appearance,—must, by this hope, be excited to purify "himself even as he is pure." Let us then hearken to that affectionate exhortation of the Apostle Peter, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as *strangers* and *pilgrims*, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."—Let us "add to our faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience;

“ and to patience, godliness; and to god-  
 “ liness, brotherly kindness; and to bro-  
 “ therly kindness, charity. — For so an  
 “ entrance shall be ministered unto us  
 “ abundantly, into the everlasting king-  
 “ dom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus  
 “ Christ.”

3dly, It becomes *strangers and sojourners* to endure with patience and fortitude any hardships they may meet with on their journey homeward.——We ought, indeed, my brethren, to lay our account with inconveniences by the way: our Master, who “ was a man of sorrows,” hath told us expressly, that “ in the world we  
 “ shall have tribulation.” — “ Ye know,” said he, “ that the world hated me, be-  
 “ fore it hated you. If ye were of the  
 “ world, the world would love his own;  
 “ but because ye are not of the world, but  
 “ I have chosen you out of the world,  
 “ therefore the world hateth you.”—Yet however painful those sufferings may be, the prospect of the joy that awaiteth us, is more than sufficient to support us under them; especially when it is consider-  
 ed,

ed, that the afflictions of this present life, if wisely improved, shall exalt us to higher dignity in the kingdom of our Father. It is recorded of the primitive Christians, that "they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods," because "they knew in themselves, that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance." — "They were troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;" as we read, *2 Cor. iv. 8, 9.* And if any shall inquire, what it was that rendered them superior to these trials, they may be fully informed by St Paul himself in the close of that chapter, where he saith, "For this cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, and are temporal, but at those things which are not seen, and are eternal."

*4thly*, If we view heaven as the place of our everlasting abode, we shall, above all things, be solicitous to be thoroughly acquainted with the way that leads to it. David prayed with the utmost propriety, when he thus expressed himself, *Psalms* cxix. 19. “ I am a stranger in the earth, “ hide not thy commandments from me.” He knew that “ the word of God was a “ lamp to his feet and a light unto his “ path;” he therefore “ hid it in his “ heart,” as the most inestimable treasure he could possess, and made it the subject of his constant delightful meditation: “ Thy testimonies,” said he, “ are “ my delight, and my counsellors;” — and “ thy statutes have been my songs in “ the house of my pilgrimage.” — I do not deny that reason, even in its present dark and corrupt state, may, in many important instances, lead a sober inquirer to the knowledge of his duty; but, alas! in a great variety of cases, he would find himself utterly at a loss, not knowing which road to take: for though reason,  
unassisted,

unassisted, may still be able to trace out the capital lines of sin and duty, yet the confines of each, the precise boundaries which divide the lawful from the forbidden ground, require a more penetrating eye to discern them. But in the Holy Scriptures these are plainly marked out to us by the finger of God, who cannot err. The ten laws published from Sinai, which were afterwards explained and amplified by our Saviour in his sermon upon the mount, furnish us with a complete and unerring rule of life, and describe that "high way of holiness," in which we may walk without fear or diffidence. We need not perplex ourselves with the doubtful reasonings of our own minds; we may find an easy solution of all our difficulties in that written "law and testimony," according to which we shall be finally judged: for "the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple:"—"the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." — Such is the guide which God hath provided for directing his *pilgrims* in their way homeward:

homeward: and if we are possessed of the temper of pilgrims, “ we shall esteem the “ words of God’s mouth more than our “ necessary food ;” and say concerning them, “ More to be desired are they than “ gold, yea than much fine gold ; sweeter “ also than honey, and the honey-comb. “ Moreover by them is thy servant warned ; “ and in keeping of them there is great re- “ ward.”

5thly, If we consider ourselves as *strangers and sojourners* here below, we ought certainly to behave like those who belong to a better country, and to show by our conduct, that we have a nobler birth and higher hopes than worldly men have. — God frequently complained of his ancient people, that by the wickedness of their lives, they had caused “ his holy name to be profaned “ among the heathen.” They who love their country, will be jealous of its credit in foreign parts, and carefully avoid every thing that hath a tendency to bring upon it the least stain or reproach. Accordingly, we are exhorted in Scripture, to “ adorn “ the doctrine of God our Saviour in all “ things :”



“ things:”—“ to walk circumspectly, not  
 “ as fools, but as wise;”— and particularly,  
 “ to walk in wisdom towards them that are  
 “ without.”—Indeed, as I formerly ob-  
 served, our first care should be, that we  
 ourselves receive no hurt; but I must now  
 remind you, that something more is incum-  
 bent upon us than regard to our own safe-  
 ty: We ought not only to avoid or resist  
 temptations to sin, but also to shine in all  
 the virtues of a holy life, that by the light  
 of our good works, others may be excited  
 to glorify our Father who is in heaven. We  
 have two things that should engage our at-  
 tention; *first*, our own welfare; and *next*,  
 the credit and honour of that religion we  
 profess: And he is too selfish to be a good  
 Christian, who minds only the one, and  
 overlooks the other.—Wide, my brethren,  
 is the compass of our duty: the spiritual  
*sojourner* hath many parts to perform; he  
 must not satisfy himself with a retired and  
 private virtue, but is bound by the strictest  
 ties of gratitude, “ to show forth the praises  
 “ of that God, who hath called him out of  
 “ darkness, into his marvellous light.”—

Every

Every step of our conduct is of the greatest importance, not to ourselves only, but to others also: and therefore we ought to move with caution and accuracy. It is not enough that we “ cease to do evil;” we must likewise “ learn to do well:” Nor should we even think it enough, to do what is simply good; we should aim at that good which is most reasonable and excellent. In fine, to live as becometh true pilgrims, is to walk with our rule continually in our eye, and never knowingly to deviate from it, either to the right hand or to the left: It is to ponder every step we take; to weigh every undertaking, with all its circumstances, in the balance of the sanctuary: It is to consider the consequences of our behaviour with regard to others; to have our whole conversation, our words and our actions, “ seasoned with salt;” as the Apostle hath expressed it; that is, not only innocent in themselves, but, as much as may be, edifying also, that they may minister grace to those who hear, or behold us.

There is an affected singularity, which is conceited and disobliging, and does real dishonour

dishonour to religion, representing it as childish, trifling, and capricious: on the other hand, there is a servile compliance with the maxims and fashions of the world, which is mean and pusillanimous, and represents religion as variable, timid, and irresolute: Betwixt these two extremes lies a middle plan of conduct, which expresseth the true genius of Christianity, representing it as generous, intrepid, and disinterested: —When we dare avow the sentiments of our hearts, and obey the dictates of conscience, and the laws of our God, in the face of the sun; when our whole behaviour is consistent and uniform, and shows that we have no other aim, but to promote the honour of our heavenly Father, and to obtain his approbation: Then we act up to the dignity of our Christian character; then we live as *strangers and sojourners* upon earth.

There is one thing in particular I would recommend to you as peculiarly suited to the condition of pilgrims; and that is a decent sobriety of manners, a grave and serious deportment, in opposition to what the Scriptures call a “vain conversation.”

—I do not mean that you should be sad and dejected; blessed be God, the Christian hath a more extensive field of pleasure before him, than fancy itself can represent to the sensual mind. The seriousness to which I am pressing you is not opposed to joy, but to levity: I call you to delights that are pure, sincere, and inward, in opposition to “the laughter of the fool, “and that delusive mirth that ends in “heaviness.” I would only have you to show, that you find a *present* reward in the service of God, and that the joys of religion are of too sublime a quality to mix and incorporate with the dead and polluted pleasures of sense: I would have you to behave with that spirit which becomes your high birth; like persons who know that God is their father, that Christ is their elder brother, and the Holy Spirit their comforter and guide. In short, I would have you to act like citizens of heaven, who are only passing through this earth, and have little more concern in it than to escape its pollutions, by keeping the strait and narrow road that leads to the

the

the promised land of rest.—Why should you borrow, nay, why should you seem to borrow, water from the “broken” and dirty “cisterns” of the sensualist, who have access to “the fountain of living waters?”—Is it not your duty, is it not your honour, to show the world, that no part of your happiness depends upon such low gratifications; that you find enough in God to quench your thirst, and to satisfy the most unbounded desires of your soul?—This, my brethren, is the way, the only way, to awaken the attention of secure besotted sinners. Let them see what true godliness can do by itself; and this may beget in them a conviction of its worth and excellence. But how shall they discover that religion hath any peculiar virtue to strengthen and comfort the soul, so long as they can observe those who profess it, walking in the same road, and frequenting the same haunts of vanity with themselves?—There is a majesty in strict and serious godliness, that commands esteem and reverence even from the worst of men: **But when religion assumes the habit and complexion**

complexion of the world, when it is blended with the fashionable follies of the age, it usually makes such a clumsy figure, such a motley appearance, that it becomes more ridiculous and contemptible than pure unmixed folly itself. “ Wherefore come out  
 “ from among them, and be ye separate,  
 “ faith the Lord, and touch not the un-  
 “ clean thing; and I will receive you, and  
 “ be a father unto you, and ye shall be my  
 “ sons and daughters, faith the Lord Al-  
 “ mighty.” Once more, in the

*6th* place, If indeed we have turned our back upon this world, and are travelling to a better country, let us help one another by the way, and carry as many home with us as we can. Do we meet with any who are feeble and dejected? let us do every thing in our power to strengthen and encourage them.— Are any doubtful and hesitating about the right path? let us give them our best advice; and, according to our ability, show them the way wherein they ought to go.—Are any discouraged by the opposition they meet with, or the dangers they fear? let us take the road be-  
 fore

fore them, and animate them to follow our example.—Do we see any stopping short, or even looking aside to some alluring objects, that have a tendency to withdraw their hearts from God? let us, in the spirit of meekness, reprove and admonish them.—Above all, let us beware of falling out with our fellow-travellers; for that must necessarily mar the progress of both: if they and we are going to the same place, let that suffice to unite us in affection; and let it be agreed, that we may differ in lesser things.

But many, alas! take the opposite road, and walk in “the broad way that leadeth to destruction.” How shall we behave with respect to these?—Let us remember, my friends, that they are still our brethren, and that the time was, when we ourselves were “foolish and disobedient,” even as they are.—Should we meet with one of our countrymen in a foreign land, living in a poor and abject condition, and at the same time knew that he was heir to a plentiful estate at home, would we not endeavour to make him sensible of his folly? would we not use every argument to persuade him

to return with us?—Why, this is the very case.—We see immortal creatures forgetting themselves, and the great things they may possess in the heavenly world, pleased and deluded with the veriest trifles, with lying vanities that perish in the using: They are really our brethren; and there is enough in our Father's house both for them and us.—Indeed, if the provision were scanty, we might have some colour of excuse for leaving them behind us; but the heavenly inheritance is sufficient for us all; nay, the number of co-heirs, instead of diminishing, increaseth the happiness of each individual.

We had all wandered into “a far country,” when our compassionate Father sent his *beloved Son* to invite us home: And if any of us have got our minds enlightened; if by grace we have been awakened from our fatal lethargy, and determined to comply with the kind invitation; shall we not do what in us lies, to awaken those who are still asleep? shall we not tell them the good news, and press them to go with us?—Oh! it is terrible to think of an everlasting separation. Place yourselves before



fore the judgement-seat, and think how affecting that awful moment shall be, when the Judge shall pronounce the final doom, and send away from his presence some of those with whom we once were acquainted, perhaps intimately connected, nay, whom we dearly loved; send them, I say, from his presence to the other side of that unpassable gulf, from whence they shall never return!——How that final parting shall then be felt by us, I know not; but surely the distant prospect of it is dreadful in the mean time. O then let us do what we can to prevent it! Let us imitate that *good Shepherd* “who came to seek and to save that which was lost:” *He* “gave his life for the sheep;” and shall any who have tasted the sweetness of his mercy, think it much to follow with their warmest intreaties, those unhappy wanderers, who, as they themselves once did, have left the good pasture, and continue to stray in the barren wilderness, where, without speedy relief, they must irrecoverably perish?——God forbid:—Let us have pity upon those who have not yet learnt to

pity themselves; and to the most vigorous efforts we can use for their recovery, let us add our fervent prayers to God, that he may send forth his Spirit, to bring them into the way of peace and safety, and then to keep and guide them in that way, till he lead them at length into “the land of up-  
“rightness.”

THUS have I endeavoured to show, in a variety of instances, what manner of life is most expressive of the temper, and best suited to the condition, of *strangers and sojourners*. May God accompany what hath been said with his effectual blessing, and enable us all so to behave in this “house of  
“our pilgrimage,” that when we shall have done with earthly things, we may be received into those “everlasting habitations, whi-  
“ther Christ hath gone to prepare a place  
“for us.” To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, the one living and true God, be ascribed, as is most due, all blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, both now and evermore. *Amen.*

## S E R M O N XVIII.

Preached on the day of National Thanksgiving, Nov. 29. 1759.

JOSHUA xxiii. 11.

*Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God.*

**T**HESE are the words of a foldier and a faint; a foldier, equally brave and successful; a faint, distinguished by the testimony of God himself. They are the words of Joshua, the victorious leader of God's ancient people, and make a part of that solemn valedictory speech, which he pronounced in a national assembly of his countrymen a little before his death.

The same happy union of fortitude and piety which had rendered his active life so glorious, still shone forth with undiminished strength, to adorn the concluding scene. Never did the magnanimity of the foldier, never did the piety of the faint,

never did the generous zeal of the patriot, appear with more becoming grace and dignity, than when this great and good man rose up in the presence of all his brethren, and thus addressed the tribes of Israel:

“ I am old and stricken in age; and ye  
“ have seen all that the Lord your God hath  
“ done unto all these nations, because of  
“ you; for the Lord your God is he that  
“ hath fought for you. Behold, I have  
“ divided unto you by lot these nations  
“ that remain, to be an inheritance for your  
“ tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations  
“ that I have cut off, even unto the great  
“ sea westward. And the Lord your God,  
“ he shall expel them from before you, and  
“ drive them from out of your sight, and  
“ ye shall possess their land, as the Lord  
“ your God hath promised unto you. Be  
“ ye therefore very courageous, to keep and  
“ to do all that is written in the book of  
“ the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside  
“ therefrom, to the right hand or to the  
“ left; that ye come not among these na-  
“ tions, these that remain amongst you, nei-  
“ ther

“ ther make mention of the name of their  
 “ gods, nor caufe to fwear by them, neither  
 “ ferve them, nor bow yourfelves unto them:  
 “ but cleave unto the Lord your God, as ye  
 “ have done unto this day. For the Lord  
 “ hath driven out from before you, great  
 “ nations and ſtrong; but as for you, no  
 “ man hath been able to ſtand before you  
 “ unto this day. One man of you ſhall  
 “ chafe a thouſand; for the Lord your God,  
 “ he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath  
 “ promiſed you. *Take good heed therefore*  
 “ *unto yourſelves, that ye love the Lord your*  
 “ *God.*”

“ How forcible are right words !” Well  
 did Solomon ſay, that “ the tongue of the  
 “ wife is health,” and “ a word fitly ſpoken,  
 “ like apples of gold in pictures of ſilver.”  
 An addreſs more worthy of the ſpeaker, or  
 better adapted to thoſe who heard it, can-  
 not be deviſed, than that which theſe verſes  
 preſent to our view. The Jews were at this  
 time in full poſſeſſion of the promiſed land;  
 every man dwelt ſafely under his vine, and  
 under his fig-tree; neither was there any  
 to make them afraid; for “ the Lord had

“ given them rest from all their enemies “ round about.” By a train of the most astonishing victories, they had totally subdued the nations of Canaan, whose country they divided by lot among themselves. Such a valuable conquest, equally complete and glorious, afforded matter of joy and triumph to them all; but chiefly to Joshua, who conducted their arms, and to whose wisdom and valour, as the means under God, they were visibly indebted for all their successes.

Here then was a theatre, on which ambition and vain-glory might have acted their parts to great advantage; nay, they might have done it almost without fear of detection or reproof. No claim of merit would have been thought excessive, no applause too high, no reward too great, for such an illustrious hero as Joshua; and had his speech been artfully framed to exalt *himself*, the effect of it would probably have been similar to that of Herod's oration, when “ the people gave a shout, saying, “ It is the voice of a God, and not of a “ man.”

But

But Joshua possessed “another spirit.” Long had he been dead to pride and self-interest: He fought not his own praise, but the honour of his God, and the prosperity of his brethren.—He reminds them, indeed, that he had often led them to victory and triumph; but with the same breath he reminds them also, that “it was the Lord their God that fought for them.”——  
 “They got not the land by their own sword,  
 “neither did their own bow save them,  
 “but the right hand and arm of Almighty  
 “Jehovah.” To him therefore the sole tribute of praise was due: This was the important truth which Joshua chiefly recommended to the attention of his hearers. And now knowing that the time of his departure was at hand, as the last and strongest proof of his affection and care,—with the authority of a governor he commands,—with the bowels of a father he intreats,—and with all the seriousness of a dying faint, he obtests them, *to love the Lord their God.*

This, my brethren, is the charge which the best of **KINGS**, our truly magnanimous  
 and

and most gracious SOVEREIGN, doth this day address to us.—He hath called us together by his royal proclamation, to return public thanks to Almighty God, for the variety of great and public blessings, which have enriched and distinguished this memorable year.—The preceding year was indeed glorious; but of this it may be said, with a peculiar emphasis, that it excels in glory. Even to the present day, the series of victory remains unbroken; no defeat hath stained our national honour, nor any public disaster interrupted our joy. Hitherto our sunshine hath been clear and unclouded: Amidst the tumults and horrors of surrounding war, blessed with uncommon plenty at home, we enjoy all the comforts of domestic peace; whilst every quarter of the world hath beheld our triumphs, and on every element, by sea and by land, success hath crowned the British arms.—Success, I say, of the best and most valuable kind; for the fruits of our victories are not the romantic and airy additions of military fame, but advantages of a substantial and more enduring nature:—the increase of our  
naval



naval strength, which experience hath shown to be the surest means of our defence;—the enlargement of our commerce, the great source of our wealth;—the protection of our King’s electoral dominions, unjustly invaded on our account;—and the security of our colonies from the inroads and devastations of merciless *savages*, rendered still more savage by the instigation and example of perfidious Frenchmen. ——— These are laurels which wither not; acquisitions of real and permanent worth, which, with humble boldness, we may publish to the world, and even avow to our own hearts, as becoming grounds of thanksgiving to that God, “who is righteous in all his ways, “and holy in all his works; who executeth “judgement for the oppressed, but the “way of the wicked he turneth upside “down.”

This King of heaven, “who abaseth “those that walk in pride;—all whose works “are truth, and his ways judgement,” we praise, extol, and honour this day, as the author of these signal and unmerited blessings. “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto  
 “us:”

“ us:”—not unto the wisdom of our counsellors, not unto the valour of our troops, though both have equalled our wishes, and even exceeded our hopes;—yet not unto these,—but “ unto the name of God,” is all “ the glory” due.—He it was who taught our senators wisdom; He it was who girded our soldiers with strength; it was the Lord our God who fought for us in every successful enterprise; who in *Germany* and *Canada* revealed His mighty arm on our side; who hath thus far prospered our righteous cause, and made us to triumph over them that hate us.

Justly may we say with the church of old,  
 “ O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he  
 “ hath done marvellous things; his right  
 “ hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him  
 “ the victory. The Lord hath made known  
 “ his salvation, his righteousness hath he  
 “ openly shewed in the sight of the Hea-  
 “ then: he hath remembered mercy to-  
 “ wards” BRITAIN; “ all the ends of the  
 “ earth have seen the salvation of our  
 “ God.”

But, my brethren, thanksgiving and praise

are

are only a part of the tribute we owe. Joshua made a farther demand upon his countrymen. And as our situation, in some of its most important circumstances, is apparently similar to theirs; the same charge that was given to them, with the utmost propriety, may be addressed to us :

*Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God.* For,

In the *first* place, It is for this very end that national mercies are bestowed.—

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with  
 “all thy heart, and with all thy soul,” is the first and great commandment in the law; and Providence enforceth what the law demands. God speaks to us by his works, as well as by his word; both are his messengers: and it often happens, that the signs of the one are as expressive and intelligible as the language of the other. Hence a voice is ascribed to the rod by the Prophet Micah, (*Micah* vi. 9.) “The Lord’s voice crieth  
 “unto the city, and the man of wisdom  
 “shall see thy name: HEAR YE THE ROD,  
 “and who hath appointed it.” Judgement  
 is

is that stern messenger which speaks to us out of the whirlwind, saying, "Why should ye be stricken any more? Will ye revolt still more and more?"—But mercy hath a softer voice; in mildest accents it courts our return, and with persuasive eloquence disarms our enmity, bends the stubborn will, and captivates the heart.—"When our own wickedness corrects us, and our backslidings reprove us," then it is expected that we should "know and see what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against God:" After this manner do his judgments teach men righteousness. But his mercies have a higher office; to them it belongs to teach men love; they represent God as truly amiable, as the most worthy object of our supreme affection.—Signal and unmerited favours, especially when conferred upon those who are not only unworthy of them, but who deserve the contrary, are justly compared to "coals of fire," which melt down every thing but dross. Even the malice of Saul was so far overcome by the generosity of David, that "he lifted up his voice and wept, and said unto

" to

“ to David, Thou art more righteous than  
 “ I; for thou hast rewarded me good,  
 “ whereas I have rewarded thee evil.” Now  
 of this kind are all God’s favours towards  
 us. And shall favours of such a nature be  
 heaped upon us in vain? Surely, when  
 he whom we had offended, most basely of-  
 fended, is not only merciful, but bounteous  
 also; when he not only spares us, but even  
 loads us with benefits; our hearts must be  
 impenetrable, and void of all feeling, if  
 they are not subdued to the love, as well as  
 the admiration, of such amazing generosity.  
 —We have been praising God for his  
 goodness; but praise without love can never  
 ascend to his throne with acceptance.—Let  
 us therefore *take good heed unto ourselves,*  
*that we love the Lord our God;* and the rather  
 because,

In the *second* place, We are in danger of  
 perverting his goodness to a very different  
 purpose. The caution given in the text,  
 plainly implies this; and the subsequent hi-  
 story of the Jewish nation as plainly proves,  
 that the caution was necessary.

We

We read in the book of Judges, that after the death of Joshua, “ there arose another generation, which knew not the Lord, and they forsook the God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and served other gods.” This monstrous ingratitude Moses had suspected, and left many warnings on record to guard them against it.—“ It shall be,” said he in one place, “ when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land, which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give thee, great and goodly cities which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good things which thou filledst not, and wells which thou diggedst not, and vineyards and olive-trees which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten, and art full, then beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, and from the house of bondage.” And in another place, after recounting many temporal blessings which God had promised to bestow upon them, he thus concludes: “ Take heed to yourselves,

“ selves,

“ selves, that your heart be not deceived,  
 “ and ye turn aside, and serve other gods,  
 “ and worship them.” — “ But Jehshurun  
 “ waxed fat, and kicked, and lightly esteem-  
 “ ed the rock of his salvation.” Israel, that  
 was humble in the wilderness, tame and  
 tractable in those lean pastures, grew proud  
 and wanton in fruitful Canaan. When  
 “ they sucked honey out of the rock,” as  
 the Prophet expresses it, “ and did eat the  
 “ fat of lambs, and kidneys of wheat, then,  
 “ said they, We are lords, we will come no  
 “ more unto thee.”

That prosperity should have another and  
 very different effect upon us, I have already  
 endeavoured to show; and, blessed be God,  
 examples of a wise and laudable improve-  
 ment of prosperity are not altogether want-  
 ing. It is recorded to the honour of good  
 King Jehoshaphat, *2 Chron.* xvii. 5, 6. who  
 had silver and gold in abundance, that “ his  
 “ heart was lifted up in the way of God’s  
 “ commandments.”—If we read the begin-  
 ning of the eighteenth Psalm, in connection  
 with the title prefixed to it, we shall discover  
 another amiable instance of the most exact

obedience to the command in my text. The title runs in these words:—*A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto the Lord the words of this song, in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul; and he said, verse 1. “ I will love thee, O “ Lord, my strength.”*—But few, alas! comparatively speaking, walk in the steps of these holy men. Even a pious Hezekiah, “ rendered not again according to the benefits done unto him, but his heart was lifted up;” for which cause “ there came wrath upon himself, and upon Judah, and upon Jerufalem.”

Great indeed is our national felicity; but equally great is our danger of abusing it.—Scarcely had the Israelites escaped from the house of bondage, when those very spoils they had recovered from their task-masters were formed into an idol, which they basely worshipped in place of that God, whose outstretched arm had wrought their deliverance. And is it not possible, my brethren, that the fruits of that success with which God hath been pleased to favour us, may,  
by



by a like abuse, be perverted into weapons of rebellion against himself?—Luxury is the common attendant upon affluence: This unfits the mind for serious thinking, and breeds a coldness and indifference towards spiritual things; in consequence of which, a secret disaffection to those laws which would restrain him, soon takes root in the heart of the sensualist, till, wearied with the struggle betwixt Reason and Appetite, he at length sets himself in opposition to God and his ways; reproaches, with the names of *ostentation* or *hypocrisy*, all serious religion and godliness in others; turns away his eyes from the light that reproves him, and even doth what he can to extinguish it altogether.—Thus doth “the prosperity of fools destroy them:”—“When men see no changes, they fear not God.” What reason then have we to join trembling with our mirth, and to *take good heed unto ourselves*, lest our table become a snare to us, and the uncommon blessings we have received, instead of heightening our love, should cause us to forget the hand that bestowed them, and prove the means of alienating our hearts

from God!——To prevent this, let me beg your attention to what I have further to offer, in the

*Third and last* place,—That to *love the Lord our God*, is not only the return he expects for his benefits, but the return he demands.—It is not only just and reasonable in its own nature, but it is likewise absolutely necessary on our part;—nay, it is the one thing needful; the with-holding of which shall unavoidably be attended with the most fatal consequences.

This expresses the true spirit of the charge, and was certainly the important truth that Joshua meant to convey to his hearers.—His great aim was, to remind them, in the *first* place, that all the past successes were entirely owing to the favour of the Most High; and, *next*, to persuade them, that upon the continuance of his Almighty protection, their future prosperity would solely depend.—He exhorts them indeed, verse 6. to be “very courageous:” but for what end? Was it only to fight against men?——No; it was also that, in opposition

to

to all dangers and difficulties of what kind soever, they might stedfastly obey the Lord their God.—“ Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom, to the right hand or to the left.” And then, says he, verse 10. “ One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the Lord your God is he that fighteth for you.” But he adds, in the verses following my text, “ If ye go back, and transgress the covenant of the Lord your God, know for a certainty, that the anger of the Lord shall be kindled against you, and ye shall quickly perish from off the good land which he hath given you.”—Accordingly, we are told, in the second chapter of the book of *Judges*, that when the succeeding generation forsook the Lord, and served other gods, “ then the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about; so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies, and they were

“fore distressed.” Now all these things happened to them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.—God is always the same; he is “in one mind, and none can turn him.” His love to righteousness, his hatred of sin, are both unchangeable; and therefore the truth of that assertion must be equally unchangeable, that “righteousness exalteth a nation;” whereas “sin is the reproach,” and, if obstinately persisted in, must prove the ruin “of any people.”——“For wickedness burneth as the fire, it shall devour the briars and thorns, and kindle in the thickets of the forests, and they shall mount up as the lifting up of smoke; through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire.” *Isa. ix. 18.*

Ought we not then *to take good heed unto ourselves, that we love the Lord our God?* Joshua gave this advice to the Jews a long time after the Lord had given them rest from all their enemies round about. We, my brethren, are still engaged in war,  
the

the issue of which is always doubtful. We have drawn the sword, and thus far have employed it with glory and success: But it was a prudent caution which Ahab gave to Benhadad, “ Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast himself as he that taketh it off.” Our enemies are weakened, but they are likewise greatly irritated; and still they are a strong and formidable people. We can look back upon a time when our own situation was very unpromising;—when every alarm brought a panic along with it, till roused by insult, and a sense of danger, the national spirit at length awoke; vigorous measures were pursued; and, by the good hand of our God upon us, have wonderfully prospered.—Is it a thing impossible, is it even improbable, that similar causes may produce similar effects in the councils and measures of the nation with whom we contend?

Were they in reality weaker than we are willing to suppose, it would ill become us to deny a truth, of which we ourselves have so lately had the happy experience, to wit, “ That the battle is not always to

“ the

“ the strong.” Both at *Minden* and *Quebec*, every advantage for victory is now certainly known to have been on the side of our enemies. The fate of nations is not determined by the policy of men: the events of war are conducted and over-ruled by a higher hand than the arm of flesh. Hear what God said to the Jews by the Prophet *Jeremiah*: “ Though ye had smitten the  
 “ whole army of the Chaldeans that fight  
 “ against you, and there remained but  
 “ wounded men among them, yet should  
 “ they rise up every man in his tent, and  
 “ burn this city with fire.” — “ Without  
 “ me,” says he by another Prophet, “ they  
 “ shall bow down under the prisoners, and  
 “ they shall fall under the slain.”

Blessed be God, we have large and manifold grounds of thanksgiving; but the very grounds of our thanksgiving are likewise monitors of humility, and press the necessity of securing the friendship of that Almighty Being, who “ doth according  
 “ to his will in the armies of heaven, and  
 “ amongst the inhabitants of this earth.”  
 Pride and security are fatal presages of approaching

proaching ruin.—“ Before destruction  
 “ the heart of man is haughty.” How  
 awful was the doom pronounced against  
 Tyre! (*Ezekiel xxviii. 2, et seq*). “ Thus  
 “ saith the Lord God, Because thine heart  
 “ is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am  
 “ a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the  
 “ midst of the seas; yet thou art a man,  
 “ and not God, though thou hast set thine  
 “ heart as the heart of God: behold, thou  
 “ art wiser than Daniel; there is no se-  
 “ cret that they can hide from thee:  
 “ with thy wisdom, and with thine un-  
 “ derstanding, 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,  
 “ and thine heart is lifted up because of thy  
 “ riches. Therefore thus saith the Lord  
 “ God, Because thou hast set thine heart as  
 “ the heart of God; behold therefore, I will  
 “ bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of  
 “ the nations: and they shall draw their  
 “ swords against the beauty of thy wisdom,  
 “ and they shall defile thy brightness.  
 “ They shall bring thee down to the pit,  
 “ and

“ and thou shalt die the deaths of them that  
 “ are slain in the midst of the seas.”

Let *us* learn wisdom from *their* folly.  
 —Let their punishment admonish us to  
 beware of that pride which God abhorreth :  
 —Let the manifold goodness we profess  
 to celebrate this day, lead us to “ that re-  
 “ pentance which is never to be repented  
 “ of;”—and let us fervently pray, That “ the  
 “ Holy Spirit may be given unto us, to shed  
 “ abroad the love of God in our hearts,”  
 as an effectual principle of all holy obe-  
 dience. Then may we hope, that the Lord  
 of Hosts will go forth with our armies, and  
 lead them on to new and still greater tri-  
 umphs ; till at length the desolations of war  
 shall be happily terminated by a safe, an  
 honourable, and lasting peace. Which may  
 God of his infinite mercy grant, through  
 Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.













