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SERMONS
ON PRACTICAL SUBJECTS,

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM BARLASS.



SERMONS

ON

PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.


BY WILLIAM BARLASS,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.


WITH THE

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE AUTHOR

AND THE

REV. JOHN NEWTON,

LATE RECTOR OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH, LOMBARD-STREET,

LONDON ;

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

AND

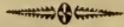
A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

PREFIXED,

BY PETER WILSON, LL. D.

AND PROFESSOR OF LANGUAGES IN COLUMBIA COLLEGE,

NEW-YORK.


DUM TACET, HEC LOQUITUR.....MARTIAL.

HE INSTANT IN SEASON AND OUT OF SEASON....2 TIM. IV. 2.

New-York :

PUBLISHED BY JAMES EASTBURN & CO.

LITERARY ROOMS, CORNER OF BROADWAY AND FINE-STREET.


Abraham Paul, printer.

.....
1818.

Southern District of New-York, ss.

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the thirtieth day of October, in the forty-third year of the Independence of the United States of America, JAMES EASTBURN & Co. of the said District, hath deposited in this Office the title of a Book, the right whereof they claim as Proprietors, in the words and figures following, to wit :

“SERMONS on Practical Subjects. By William Barlass, Minister of the Gospel.
“With the Correspondence between the Author and the Rev. John Newton, late Rector of St. Mary Woolnoth, Lombard-street, London; never before published.
“And a Biographical Sketch of the Author prefixed, by Peter Wilson, LL. D. and Professor of Languages in Columbia College, New-York.

“Dum tacet, hæc loquitur...*Martial.*

“Be instant in season and out of season....2 *Tim.* iv. 2.

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled “an Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books to the Authors and Proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;” and also to an Act, entitled “an Act supplementary to an Act entitled an Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books to the Authors and Proprietors of such copies, during the time therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the Arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints.”

JAMES DILL,

Clerk of the Southern District of New-York.

By EDWARD TRENOR, *Ass't. Clerk.*

TO
THE CONGREGATION
OF
WHITEHILL,
THE
FOLLOWING SERMONS
ARE
RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED
BY DESIRE OF
THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.



PROVIDENCE is a great mystery. If the Lord's procedure is dark in this world, we shall know it hereafter. When repeatedly urged by many, whose sincerity cannot be doubted, to publish some sermons on practical subjects, time and inclination were equally against it. Leisure was obtained in an unexpected manner, and brought the inclination along with it. Those who insisted for the publication, pointed out the discourses. It was impossible to publish them all; but their request has been complied with as far as the size of the volume would permit. All things considered, they may appear under some disadvantages; but the Lord's blessing can make them useful. Without this, better sentiment and higher polish than there is the least pretence to in these discourses, would not profit a single soul. When prepared for the pulpit, there was not the most distant intention of publishing them. In copying them for the press, it occurred, that the arrangement, in a few instances, might have been altered to advantage; but on reflection, it was thought proper to publish

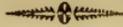
them as they were preached. They have undergone little or no variation. Perhaps they may be most useful in the simple style in which they were delivered to a plain people. Plain language is most suiting to the glad tidings of salvation. Should the same thought at any time occur in different sermons, it will be recollected that they were originally prepared at some distance of time; and there may be some coincidence owing to the subjects. On these accounts, an alteration might have been hurtful. They are designed for the good of Zion, and especially of those whose friendship will never be forgotten. Their affection and sollicitation have drawn them to the light, and they should ardently pray for the blessing to accompany them. Prefaces often tell many things about the writer and his work. These seldom promote the interest of souls. The sermons will point out an object infinitely more worthy. May the Lord of the harvest bless the reader, the writer, and the work.

Whitehill, August 16, 1797.

BRIEF SKETCH

OF THE

AUTHOR'S LIFE.



THE Reverend WILLIAM BARLASS, the author of the following sermons, was born in Scotland, in the parish of Fowlis, about eight miles from Perth. After much and serious reflection, he overcame his scruples, and entered the sacred ministry, in connexion with that body of Christians usually denominated Antiburgher Seceders; and was settled at Whitehill, in the parish of New Deer, about thirty-six miles from Aberdeen; where he continued until the year 1797. The circumstances which led to a separation from his congregation, and which produced his emigration to America, are not material to the reader. The sermons must be tested by their own intrinsic merit. After his arrival in New-York, August 27, 1798, he undertook the tuition of a number of boys in the Classics, and continued in this employment with reputation and usefulness, until August, 1800; when he

commenced the business of a bookseller and stationer, which he pursued till his death, January 7, 1817. In this station he was peculiarly useful, by importing from Europe, and collecting from various quarters, an assortment of the most valuable, curious, and rare books on divinity, and in the learned languages; thus supplying wants, which could not otherwise be satisfied in this city.

The sermons now presented to the public were evidently intended by the author for the press: having been fairly transcribed by himself long before his death, and left to the care of his sister, who has at length thought proper, by the advice of her friends, to publish them. Indeed, a contract was made between the author, and a bookseller in Scotland, for giving them publicity in that country, which was prevented by nothing but his removal to America.

Many of these sermons were delivered on sacramental occasions, and all treat of important, practical, and experimental subjects. The language is plain, simple, and unaffected; and they appear well calculated to make an impression on that class of people, who occupy the middle ranks of life, who compose the majority in every congregation, and to whom they were originally addressed.

Mr. Barlass was a zealous, faithful, and impressive preacher, and acquired a high degree of popularity

with the members of the society among whom he officiated. Wherever he displayed his talents he was attended by a crowded auditory;* and many of the congregation at Whitehill, which was greatly attached to him, to this day deeply lament the loss of his services.

He was a judicious divine, a man of extensive reading, and a good classical scholar. In his manners he was mild, and without affectation; modest and unassuming in his deportment; of a sociable disposition, but much abstracted from the world; of ardent piety; humble, patient, and submissive to the will of his heavenly Father, under a severe and distressing malady, with which he was afflicted for many years, and which at last brought him to the grave.

It is hoped and believed that his sermons will be relished by all who love the truth, dressed in the garb of simplicity and neatness, without parade of words, or studied ornaments of diction.

The correspondence between the author and the pious and celebrated John Newton, whose works are

* And no wonder, for he possessed in a high degree the talents which commend a speaker. His appearance was solemn and commanding; his voice full, distinct, and melodious; and his manner characterized by a peculiar earnestness. He appeared when preaching to be talking to another, on a subject which he understood well, and on which his whole heart was set.

well known, and highly estimated, accompanies these sermons. This correspondence took its rise from the difficulties and perplexities which agitated the bosom of the author, when about to enter upon the work of the ministry; and was intended to elicit the advice and direction of that excellent man, for whom the author had a high veneration. The effect corresponded with the expectation of the author.

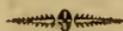
The publication of these letters will prove an acceptable present, it is hoped, to all who value the letters of Omicron; while they display the serious exercises and tender feelings of the author, in very trying circumstances, and on a subject of great difficulty and importance.

P. WILSON,

ALEX. McLEOD,

JOHN. B. ROMEYN.

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SERMON I.



LUKE XXIV. 50, 51, 52.

And he led them out as far as to Bethany ; and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

WHEN persons are in exalted stations, much depends on their conduct: we reckon every event interesting; and the heart is filled with anxiety to know the least circumstance. It is eminently so with those whom we dearly love. Nothing appears small or uninteresting. Love delights to dwell upon every period of their lives. In this manner, all ought to study Christ; and such as have a lively faith will not fail to attempt it. Actuated by this principle, Paul determined to know nothing but Christ; and the more he knew of him, the more he laboured to increase his knowledge.

The last scene has always been reckoned peculiarly interesting. Many other circumstances may be forgotten; but memory collects the whole of this, tenacious of its theme. While every part of Jacob's history attracts attention, we dwell upon the last, when he blessed his sons, and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. Stephen too peculiarly engages our attention in his last moments; when,

amidst a shower of stones, he committed his soul into the hands of Christ, and prayed for forgiveness to his murderers. We feel in the same manner when we read the last testimony of the martyrs, who were stoned or sawn asunder, burned or suffered death in its most formidable shapes. Most interesting was that scene when Paul parted from the Ephesians: "He kneeled down, and prayed with them all, and they all wept sore, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more."

Christ's death was properly the last scene of his life of humiliation; and will never be forgotten, but carefully remembered by all his friends. His hanging on the cross, and the joyful cry, "It is finished," will be the subject of their daily meditation, will feed their faith, and inflame their love. His death was *actually* the last scene as to personal intercourse with his enemies in this world. With wicked hands they crucified and slew him, and they saw him no more. He entered no more into their temple or synagogues. His death, when it happened, *appeared* the last scene to his friends. Their faith was sore tried. Downcast and ready to faint they said, "We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel."

To the unspeakable comfort of friends, and confusion of enemies, "self-vigorous he rose, and showed himself alive to chosen witnesses, by proofs so strong, that the most slow assenting had not a scruple left." Every interview which he had with his disciples, during the time he staid with them in this world, after his resurrection, is most interesting

and instructive; and especially the last, of which we have an account in the text, when "He led them out as far as to Bethany, and lifted up his hands and blessed them, and was parted from them."

This was the last interview he had with his disciples, in respect of his human nature and bodily presence: for having ascended, "the heavens must retain him until the times of restitution of all things." "Then he will come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and we must all appear at his judgment-seat."

A striking scene it was indeed, when the lately crucified Saviour collected his friends, who, a short time ago, despaired of ever seeing him, and led them out to Bethany and blessed them, and ascended in their sight! Blessed were the ears which heard his words, and the eyes which saw that sight! Reflecting on it now, his friends are ready to say, with Peter in another case, It would have been good for us to have been there! In one sense, this is impossible; but in allusion to Paul's words, we may say, while absent in body we may be present in spirit. By faith and meditation we may realize the scene, place ourselves at Bethany, and listen to the gracious words of the Redeemer: we may see his hands lifted up, and hear him pronounce his parting benediction! For our encouragement he blessed the disciples, as a pattern of what he would do in his exalted state. We may, therefore, not only place ourselves at Bethany, but actually participate of the blessing. It is no vain thing to seek him, for they who seek shall find. Though, like his disciples, we can no more

have his bodily, with them we may have his gracious, presence, according to the great and running promise, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

The happiness of those who were with Christ, and saw him ascend, may be divided into precious INSTRUCTION, blessed ATTAINMENT, and unspeakable CONSOLATION. As this happiness may be our own, it ought to be carefully considered.

I. They had precious instruction.

I. At Bethany, they got a signal proof and display of Christ’s divinity. This is the great rock on which the church is built; and, if this foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do? Nothing could be of greater importance to them, than to know whether Christ was indeed the true God; and nothing can be more important to us. There was no middle: either Jesus of Nazareth was the true God, or the greatest impostor. When he was in this world he constantly asserted his divinity, and so asserted it as his enemies well understood him, and sought to stone him, because he made himself equal with God. His friends too understood him, and cried with faith and admiration, “My Lord and my God—thou art the Christ the son of the living God—and to whom shall we go but unto thee? thou hast the words of eternal life.” The disciples had many displays of Christ’s divinity before he led them out to Bethany. He often gave them satisfying proof that he knew their thoughts: he turned water into wine;

he healed the sick; made the blind to see; raised the dead; dispossessed the devils; and wrought many other miracles. But the display of his divinity at Bethany crowned all the former. Then he not only drew down a blessing from God, but he ascended to him; and his ascension was with God's highest approbation, for the angels were sent to attend him, and a cloud received him: "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet." The following things could not fail to make deep impressions, and prove that their Master was a wonderful person indeed: he cried on the cross, and gave up the ghost;—when they went to seek him in the grave they found him alive;—now they see him ascend, attended by angels;—and justly might they ask, Will God receive and exalt a liar? While here, he always said that he was the true God, and him hath God exalted with his right hand a Prince and a Saviour. If to this it should be objected, If there was *then* such a display of his divinity, why did he not take his enemies to witness it, when it would have silenced their cavils and completely satisfied them? To this we might answer, that sense and reason have many questions, and are seldom satisfied with divine procedure. But as Christ's enemies have asked this question, we might ask another: Why did not Christ take all his enemies with him to heaven, where they would have had the fullest evidence and greatest display of his glory? We might also answer, that while his enemies did not believe in his divinity, it was by no means for want of evidence; and they did all they could to darken and resist the evidence

which they had. They sought to kill Lazarus because he was a living proof of Christ's power in raising him from the grave; they bribed the watch who brought the news of the Saviour's resurrection; and endeavoured to stifle all convictions. They said, Let him come down from the cross, that we may believe on him. He did more; he rose from the dead, and they did not believe!

2. They were confirmed in the reality, and instructed concerning the nature, of Christ's resurrection. His resurrection is of the last importance in the Christian religion, and is the great fundamental doctrine. This is plainly asserted by the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 14—18. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; ye are yet in your sins: and they also that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." The whole of Christianity, and the salvation of sinners, depend upon the resurrection of Christ. Every appearance which he made was a proof that he was risen; and he gave them the most satisfying evidence that he was the very person who was crucified, and whose body was buried in a new sepulchre in the garden. He showed them his hands and his feet. He spake in a plain and familiar manner about the things concerning which he had conversed with them before his death. These things are expressly asserted in this chapter. "Behold my hands and my feet," said the risen Saviour, "handle me and see; and he ate with them, and said unto them, these are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, &c." He went also into Galilee before them, as he had said; and nothing

could be a stronger proof that it was Christ himself, than collecting his friends to a well-known place, and conversing familiarly with them according to his promise. Every appearance which he made during his forty days abode, confirmed them that the Lord was risen indeed: and this last, at Bethany, left them without the least hesitation; for when he was carried up into heaven, they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

They were at the same time instructed about the nature of his resurrection: They were not only satisfied that the same body rose, but that their Master rose to die no more. Though Lazarus was raised from the grave, he had again to die; but Christ died *once*, and conquered death, and entered into heaven. As we shall find afterward, they learned that he rose for them, a public Head; and that as he died for our offences, so he rose again for our justification.

3. They were instructed about his ascension. Before this, they had satisfying evidence both of his divinity and resurrection; though their knowledge was now greatly increased: but they were only acquainted with his ascension as foretold in prophecy. At Bethany, they were eye-witnesses of that glorious event; and this was the chief reason for which he led them out. His ascension was necessary. If he was a divine person, he could not always dwell upon earth; and, if risen, and his work finished, the glory which followed was as necessary as the death that went before. If he rose as a public Head, it was requisite that he should enter within the vail as *forerunner*. As they were to see him no more with the

bodily eye, it was necessary, both for their own faith, and to enable them to testify to all the church, that they should know whither he went. And they had the highest possible evidence that he actually ascended into heaven.

He fixed upon a proper place. He ascended from Mount Olivet, a considerable eminence contiguous to Bethany. He chose this, to prevent any appearance of deception. Some think that what was done on this mountain might have been discerned from almost every street in Jerusalem; but whether any saw his ascent from the city or not, his disciples had a clear and distinct view of it. He was in the *midst of them*—conversing with them; and in the act of blessing, they could not but be attentive. Thus employed, he was parted a *little* from them; and when he began to be taken up, they had a distinct view of his person, and of the cloud in which he was carried up into heaven. Here there was no possibility of deception, as his ascension was slow and gradual; and the eyes of the beholders steadily followed him—rose as he rose, till the faint eye, flung backwards in the chace, was quite disabled. After this, the attending angels addressed them thus: “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing? this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven; shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Acts i. 11.

As they were *now* eye-witnesses of this great event; soon after, they had another indubitable proof that their Lord and Master was actually ascended into heaven: he promised that, when he went to his Father, he would pour out the Spirit. For the accomplishment

of this promise they tarried at Jerusalem till the day of Pentecost, when he punctually, and in a very remarkable manner, performed it; and thus they were fitted to “be witnesses unto him both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.”

4. At Bethany too, they learned that Christ’s finished work was acceptable to his Father, and accepted by him. In his death he paid the price, and made satisfaction; and in his resurrection he was discharged. In his ascension, and the glory which followed, he was highly exalted and rewarded, God expressing infinite satisfaction with *him*, and also the great work he had accomplished. Nothing could be of greater importance than to know what acceptance Christ met with: if God is not satisfied and well-pleased in him, there is no peace to the sinner; but if his sacrifice is accepted in the room of guilty men, there is the best ground for faith, hope, and joy. Whatever others may do, sure, they who saw this sight, and were blessed by their departing Lord, could not entertain a single doubt, either that Christ glorified God upon earth, or that God now glorified him in heaven. As full proof of infinite complacency in him and his finished work, Christ’s ascension to heaven is the safety of sinners; and as long as he dwells there, the most guilty, looking to him in the way of reliance and dependance, have nothing to fear from the holiness and justice of God. This is expressed in the most triumphant manner by the Apostle Paul, Rom. viii. 31—34. “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can

be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things? 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." The acceptance of Christ's work in the room of sinners, and the Father's satisfaction with it, are also strongly asserted, Philip. ii. 6—11. "Christ Jesus, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." When God the Father has received Christ to glory, and exalted him at his right hand, it is impossible that he can send any other or contrary declaration to sinners, than what he made when Christ was on earth, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." Every where the Scripture assures us that God is well pleased for his righteousness' sake.

5. They got instruction about another matter of the greatest importance, that death made no change

or alteration either in his love to them, or the execution of his mediatory offices in their behalf. He had given them many and great proofs of his love before his death. In all their difficulties and straits he relieved them. He supplied their wants, and stood between them and every storm. He treated them as friends, and admitted them to the greatest intimacy. His death was a trying hour, and they did not act the best part. When he most needed the sympathy of friends, and any small help they might have afforded; he was forsaken of all. It was no wonder though his extreme suffering and their shameful conduct might have rendered them suspicious about the continuance of his love. But as he loved them before his death, after it he rested in his love; and having loved his own, he loved them to the end. *When risen, he gave them the highest evidences that his love was the same.* Quickly did he despatch the news to them all, and to Peter, that he was risen; and that he would see them at Galilee, not to chide with them, but make their hearts rejoice. When he met with them he proclaimed his love in these gracious words, "Peace be unto you." And in this last interview he blessed them. It is the comfort of all his people, that his love, like himself, is immutable, and that no part of their conduct produces any alteration in it.

Death made no change as to the *execution of his offices.* Before his death, as the great Prophet, he instructed them and others publicly, in the things which concerned their peace; and in private, he opened up to *them* the mysteries of the kingdom. After his death, he employed the forty days he tarried with them in

speaking of the things which pertain to the kingdom of God. At Bethany, too, he instructed them, and will continue for ever to execute this office. As in his death he offered up the great atoning sacrifice, so after his resurrection, as the great New Testament Aaron, he lifted up his hands and blessed them; and still "he stands at the altar with his golden censer and much incense, and offers it with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar before the throne." Rev. viii. 3. And "this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore, he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. vii. 24, 25. As King in Zion, too, with authority he commanded the blessing, and by his infinite power effectually bestowed it upon them. The manner of giving it, proves that it was not a common but special blessing, and one that would never end. He went away in the act of blessing, intimating that, while they needed, he would bless; and as King, he ascended to be enthroned.

6. That, great as their happiness was, while they enjoyed Christ's bodily presence, the want of it would be abundantly compensated by his gracious presence. Before his death, when he spake of leaving them, sorrow filled their hearts; but *now* he leaves them, and they return with *great joy*. The blessing made them glad; and the sight of their Master ascending to glory filled their hearts with joy, both on *his* account and *theirs*: he was glorified and exalted to the highest dignity, and received all power in

heaven and earth; and *they* could not want: *he* triumphed over all his enemies; and *they* could not fall before them. He ascended to bestow gifts, and especially that great gift of the Holy Spirit, who, as is said, John vii. 39, "was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified." When they received him as the great Comforter, to abide with them for ever, they *experimentally* found that they sustained no loss. The disciples had committed their souls to Christ, and were fully satisfied that he was every way worthy of that trust. *Now* they saw that they had good reason to believe and rely on him; and with joy would they recollect his words, "Where I am there shall my servants be;" and his intercessory prayer, John xvii. 24, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." Well would they now understand the meaning of his words, John xiv. 28, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father." Often are the Lord's people ready to think that their happiness would have been inconceivably great, had they enjoyed Christ's bodily presence. Happy were the disciples with it; but at Bethany they learned that they could be equally happy without it. We have only to wait a little while, and we shall be ever with the Lord, and see him as he is.

7. That, as with him, so with them, the cross is the way to the crown. He drank of the brook in the way, and lifted up his head; and so shall they. His ascension of itself taught them this lesson; and it was peculiarly evident, from the place from which he

chose to ascend—Mount Olivet. There he lately gave a proof of his humanity, and sinless infirmity, and amazing love to sinners, when, bearing the wrath of God, he sweat great drops of blood: now in the same place he gives a proof and display of his divinity in ascending. There, lately, he was not only in an agony, but suffered the greatest ignominy; there the band of soldiers came to apprehend him; and, in the very same place where his enemies seemed to triumph, he led captivity captive, and completely triumphed over them all. The same mount gave him a passage both to the cross and the crown. From the place where Christ suffered God's wrath, he chose to ascend to sit down at his right hand; and in the very place where his friends saw his greatest distress, they also saw his glory. Places are to us what God makes them; and what is now a place of weeping, may, in a little, be a place of triumph.

As Christ was in the world, so might the disciples expect to be. He had expressly told them, that they would be hated of all men for his name's sake, and that through much tribulation they would enter the kingdom. They were now to return to the world, and oppose these enemies, to whom their Master had given the deadly stroke. Whatever difficulties they might meet with, they were not to despond or be dejected. All their trials would soon be over, and they also would be received to glory.

In fine, the meaning of what they had heard from Christ concerning his death, was then opened up. Dark were their views about the nature and design of that event, before it happened. Often he spake

to them about the necessity of it, and the glory which should follow; but they did not understand him. Even after his resurrection they were slow of heart to believe what the prophets had spoken; and to two of them, going to Emmaus, he began at Moses and all the prophets, and expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself: but still darkness pervaded their minds. This event at Bethany greatly enlightened them about what he formerly said. It opened up, with remarkable clearness, the nature and end of his death. It was a satisfactory explication of the Old Testament types, shadows, and prophecies, respecting the sufferings and death of the Messiah. No longer were the minds of the disciples warped with their former notions about external pomp and grandeur in their Messiah. They now saw that his kingdom was spiritual, and not of this world. They were convinced that the deliverance which he came to accomplish was nothing less than from the wrath to come; and that, however contemptible he had appeared in the eyes of many, he was equal to the arduous undertaking. And thus instructed, "they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."—We proceed,

II. To mention some of those blessed ATTAINMENTS, which were another part of their happiness at Bethany.

In general, all the instructions which they received were great attainments, infinitely more to be desired

than gold. Even speculative knowledge of divine things is excellent; how much more that which is saving? While the disciples had their faculties improved, their hearts were bettered, their graces increased, and their spiritual life promoted.—The following are specimens.

1. It was a happy attainment to be *singled out* as witnesses of such an event, and admitted to such familiarity with their Master immediately before his entrance into glory. That they were at Bethany at that time was not fortuitous or accidental: it was not owing to any foresight of their own: no, they were *led out* of Jerusalem by Christ himself with this precise view, to witness his glorious ascension, and share of his precious grace. While *they* were led out, *multitudes* were left behind. Here, as in many other cases, the mighty, the noble, and the wise, were passed by; and a few mean and despised persons were selected to accompany Christ.

They were his friends. They had continued with him in his temptations, and, as they were to be sharers of his kingdom, he chose them as witnesses of his ascending to take actual possession of it. Christ never forgets his friends; and they who have followed him with much difficulty, and through bad report, will be amply rewarded. As these stood by him in his humiliation, they were the first to share in the advantages of his exalted state.

They were admitted to great familiarity. He conversed with them at Bethany. The matter and manner would be such as became the great speaker and the memorable occasion. If the hearts of friends are open

ed upon particular occasions, and at parting, Christ's would not be shut at Bethany. He would say something about himself, and the glorious place to which he was going;—something about his love to, and care of, them, to encourage them in their trials, till “their warfare should be accomplished.” We see in what an endearing manner he often spake to them on former occasions; and his heart could not be less expanded when just about to leave them in an evil world, and go to take possession of the mansions in his Father's house, as their forerunner and representing Head! How sweetly did he speak to them at the institution of the supper! Matt. xxvi. 17—36. With what familiarity and tenderness did he treat them, John xiii. 1—9, when he girded himself with a towel and began to wash their feet!

It may truly be said of all who ever came to the place where Christ was dispensing his blessings, and were made sharers of his grace, as of the disciples, that they came not by chance. They are always brought by the Lord's secret and powerful providence. His hand may not be noticed at the time; but if divine grace is communicated, those who receive it will afterward observe that the Lord himself led them. Indeed, there is nothing accidental about divine grace. The time, place, and measure, were all determined; and often the Lord's providence appears almost as powerful and miraculous in bringing the persons unto the means of divine institution, as his grace in conquering their hearts and gaining them to himself. In every period of the church we have some instances almost equally striking as these of the

jailer and Onesimus. As converting grace is never bestowed by chance, so every future communication is the effect of divine purpose and counsel. Where he designs to hold singular communion with his people, or grant increase of grace, *he will always lead them out himself*. However unobserved it may be in this world, in the other, where the saints are remembering all the way in which the Lord hath conducted them, as to all rich communications of grace, it will be remarked, he led us out as far as this place or that, and blessed us.

2. Their doubts and fears about themselves, and the good cause which they had espoused, were removed. Many fears about themselves perplexed their hearts; and their minds were lately filled with the most distressing doubts. They had left all to follow a Master, who was “a reproach of men, and despised of the people;” or, in the language of Isaiah, “who had no form or comeliness, and was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;” and that Master had been cruelly taken from them, and “with wicked hands was crucified and slain.” The disciples seemed to be orphans indeed! Even when Christ was alive, they were often exposed to the insults and rage of their enemies; and after his death they were deprived of Him on whom alone they had all their dependance. At Bethany matters assumed a very different aspect. The gloom which sat so heavy on their minds was dissipated, and now the cheering rays of hope animated their hearts. Thus the weary mariner, tempest-tossed, looks on every surge as the imme-

diate instrument of death, trembles at the dreadful darkness of the night, and longs for day: the sun arises; every cloud is dispelled; the whole sky is serene, and the storm is changed into a calm. He reflects upon the scene with pleasure and satisfaction, when the danger is wholly over. At Bethany the Sun of Righteousness, lately behind a cloud, shone with peculiar brightness; and they were absolutely certain that the clouds could never return. They saw Christ as infinitely worthy of all the trust they had placed in him, and would hear such encouraging words from his mouth as he spake to John, Rev. i. 17, 18. "Fear not; I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death." And how could they fear! He had power enough to take care of their persons and best interests; and his love was equal to his power.

Their fears would also be removed about *the good cause they had espoused*. Lately, they thought that it was buried with their Master, and under a gravestone. Greatly ignorant of the nature of Christ's kingdom, they apprehended it could never be restored to Israel; or, at least, that they would never witness the joyful event. They were scarcely acquainted with any other language, but that of despondency. At Bethany they saw him exalted, and put in possession of all power, and infinitely able to maintain his interest, support his people under all their sufferings, and disappoint his adversaries; and therefore they had no reason to be discouraged. If the sight which the disciples then got, tended to

encourage their hearts about the Lord's cause, there never can be reason for greater fear or discouragement at any future period. It remains an unalterable truth, infinitely calculated to fill the heart with comfort, "But our God"—*God in our nature*—"is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he pleased."

3. They received the blessing, which, while unspeakably valuable in itself, was made still more so by many additional considerations. *They received the blessing.* They were already united to Christ, and interested in his righteousness. Their sins were pardoned, and their persons accepted. The work of grace was begun, and the power of sin broken. When he blessed them, he recognized all these things—as if Christ had said, "What I have done for you and in you, I have done—I have died for you, and wrought out a perfect righteousness; and ye shall have the benefit of it—all these past blessings I ratify on Bethany." But when the Lord blesses one of his own people, he *confers new grace.* His blessing makes rich by increasing the former stock. He drew down from heaven, and communicated to them from his own fulness, grace for grace. He not only discovered himself as the fountain of all grace, but he made the streams flow in richly upon their souls. *They enjoyed intimate communion.* Christ opened his heart as their best friend, and did not conceal from them what he was about to do; and they, when led out to that "field, gave him their loves." In this communion there was sweet enjoyment, and endearing intimacy. In fine, as a part of the blessing, he *prayed for them.* In a royal manner, and with au-

thority, he commanded the blessing; and spake as became his present glorious condition.

While infinitely valuable in itself, *many considerations* tended to enhance the blessing. It would greatly affect their hearts, and increase their joy, that they were favoured with these happy attainments after such signal trials, and in the very place where they had lately witnessed and felt so great sorrow; and so soon after they had forsaken their Master, and fled. But, above all, this consideration would heighten the blessing in their esteem, that it was *a solemn parting blessing* when just about to bid them farewell. Before leaving them, he settled all differences, removed every ground of controversy, spake peace to their hearts, gave them the most convincing proof of the sincerity and greatness of his love, and left them without the least room for scruple or hesitation. The blessings of dying persons have been always eagerly sought, and greatly valued. Jacob and Esau strove about their father's blessing, when near his last; and the sons of Jacob, in their turn, made a similar application to him on his death-bed. Christ, the moment before he ascended to sit down on his throne, lifted up his hands and blessed his disciples. We shall only add, that they were to consider what Christ did then as equally efficacious to their latest breath.—Which leads us to another part of their attainment, which is,

4. Security and encouragement for every future period of their lives. What Christ did then may justly be compared to the powerful look, which Gideon got from Jehovah, which conveyed strength

to fit him for the arduous work before him. Judges vi. 14. "And the Lord *looked* upon him, and said, Go in *this* thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hands of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" That favourable and gracious look secured the divine presence with him; hence, verse 16, "And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." The disciples were to see their Master no more after the flesh, and were soon to leave the happy spot where he and they parted. They were to enter on such work as would draw down the vengeance of the world. They would have outward fightings and inward fears. They were to oppose the wickedness and superstition both of Jews and Gentiles; and hell and earth would be against them. They would meet with something corresponding to what Paul says of himself. 2 Cor. xi. 23—29. "In labour abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

Over against all these difficulties they were to place the blessing. Wherever they might be, or in however distressing a situation, they were to recollect, carefully consider, and never forget that their Master lifted up his hands and blessed them at Bethany. A suitable remembrance of that happy event could not fail to produce great effects, and support, and encourage their hearts. Jacob never forgot his signal attainment in Bethel. Moses to his dying hour remembered the great sight which he saw, when the bush burned, and was not consumed; and long after spake of God as *his* dweller in the bush. Sure, the disciples would never forget the last interview they had with their gracious Master; and every proper recollection would make them go from strength to strength unwearied. Indeed all who have been admitted to intimate fellowship, and have got the blessing, should neither forget time nor place. Reflecting on such happy seasons would greatly tend to support them in their most disconsolate and tried hours.

It is far from being intended, by what has been now said, to insinuate that the Lord's people may depend upon grace already received. A suitable remembrance of former attainments, instead of this, has a quite opposite tendency. It leads them directly to the fountain, from which they have formerly been so richly supplied. They recollect the kind reception they met with, and know that giving does not impoverish God, and that with him is infinite fulness.

5. Once more, they had certain knowledge, not only where their Master was gone, but of the design of his departure. As we have said, it was necessary that they should know where he was gone, as they were to be his witnesses both to Jews and Gentiles. They were to bear testimony in the most solemn manner, and seal it with their blood, and therefore it was absolutely requisite that their knowledge should be clear and distinct, especially as his ascension was of infinite moment, and the eternal salvation of immortal souls greatly depended upon it.

As Christ had often instructed them concerning the design of his coming into this world, so at Bethany he informed them about the design of his departure. He descended to make his soul an offering for sin, and purchase salvation: he ascended to plead the value and efficacy of his blood, and bestow the blessings which he had procured. In this world he opened the channel for divine influences, and he ascended that they might flow out abundantly upon his church. Instead of his care about Zion being lessened when he left this world, he went to glory to manage all her concerns. He sits in heaven, and laughs at the designs of enemies, and takes special notice of the wants of all his members, who "are set as a seal upon his heart and arm." In his exalted state he is the great administrator of the covenant. Wherever he has vessels of mercy he sends the means of grace, and makes them efficacious. These things he greatly opened up to them before he left them; and still more when he performed the promise

of his Father, and sent the Holy Spirit. Their knowledge of them prior to the effusion of the Holy Ghost, is evident from their tarrying at Jerusalem in firm faith that they should be endowed with power from on high: how fully they knew them afterward, and with what undaunted courage they declared them, is evident from Peter's answer to the Jews, when examined about the good deed done to the impotent man—by what means he was made whole; “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” And from that remarkable address of Peter and the other apostles to the Jewish council, Acts v. 29—33. “Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree: him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. When they heard that they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.” It now remains to show that,

III. The disciples had strong CONSOLATION and UNSPEAKABLE JOY.

Their attainments tended greatly to comfort their hearts, and joy was the native effect of them all. When their doubts and fears were removed, their graces increased, and the blessing bestowed, they could not but rejoice; but their joy would be more full when they considered that,

1. Christ had overcome all opposition, and was exalted to glory. His enemies prosecuted him with unrelenting malice, till at last they crucified him. In their Master's honour and happiness the disciples were deeply interested; and at his death sorrow filled their hearts. He often said he would see them again, and their hearts should rejoice; and so it was. He triumphed over sin and Satan, death and the grave, wicked men and devils; and before the eyes of the disciples ascended unto glory. Every thing pertaining to his victory and triumph was comforting to them. The unfeigned love they had to him, independent of any happiness of their own, would have turned their sorrows into gladness: but their everlasting all depended upon him. Had he continued in the grave, they would have been miserable and disconsolate in this world; and their hope would have perished for ever. We may easily conceive how great their joy would be when Christ triumphed over all his enemies, from the joy which they had when they were sent out to preach and work miracles, and they "returned again with joy, saying,

Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name. And he said unto them, Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." (Luke x. 17, 20.) It doubtless must be an unfailing source of comfort to any person, in whatever situation, to know that his name is written in the Lamb's book of life; and never could this be known with more certainty, clearness, and precision, than by the disciples, when Christ lifted up his hands and blessed them. Scarcely could any trial or difficulty bring them afterward to doubt either about their Master's glory, or their own interest in him. Then they would understand the gracious words which he spake to them before his death, John xvi. 22. "And ye now, therefore, have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Their measure of comfort might not always be the same; but from that day they had ground of strong consolation.

2. Zion's greatest trials were over. The darkest hour the church ever saw, was when her Lord and Master hung on the cross. This, with peculiar emphasis and propriety, was called "the hour and power of darkness." Men and devils could do no more. Their malice seemed to get full vent. The powers of darkness appeared *wholly* to prevail against the head, and they *greatly* prevailed against the members: when *he* hung on the cross, *their* hope was nearly cut off. They felt an inward darkness corresponding to the outward which was over all the land. While Satan was doing his utmost against the

Author of grace, his malice was exerted against grace itself in the hearts of the disciples.

No future trial could equal this one. Christ's followers were not at ease in Zion; but deeply shared in her affliction. Now, that Christ was exalted at the right hand of God, they could say, as in Ps. xlv. 2—6, "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the sea, though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God; the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early." The greatest hardships to which they were afterward reduced they met with fortitude, and bore with patience, and were not dismayed at death itself in its most formidable aspect. They sang in prisons, took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and praised under the greatest tortures!

3. They were assured that in a very little they would be with him. He had told them before that he went to prepare a place for them, and that he would come again, and receive them unto himself, that where he was there they might be also. What he did at parting was preparing them for that place; and *his* ascension secured *theirs*. Firm faith and certain knowledge of their being ever with him, and sharers of his glory, could not fail to comfort their hearts. Meanwhile, he was not unmindful of them in their present situation. Though absent as to his bodily presence, he engaged to be graciously and spi-

ritually with them. He promised to supply their wants, and manage all their concerns; subdue their enemies, and never leave them until he had done all that for them which his word taught them to expect. To complete their comfort, he assured them that his ear would be open to the voice of their supplications, his eye upon them in every situation, and his arm would be stretched forth for their relief. He would deliver them in six troubles; yea, in seven “no evil should touch them.”—They had another full source of strong consolation in Bethany, as they obtained,

4. An assurance of Christ’s coming again in power and great glory. Never was sorrow or shame equal to Christ’s. “He endured the cross, despising the shame.” His disciples lately saw, with sorrow, their Master hung up naked, exposed to the multitude, and treated with the greatest cruelty, ignominy, and infamy. Could they at that time have been fully persuaded, that these very persons should have seen him with honour and glory equal to his ignominy, how would their hearts have rejoiced! They did not leave Bethany till they were certain that he would come again into the world in a glorious manner, and that “every eye should see him, and *they also which pierced him.*” The angels, by divine appointment, for their comfort, announced that glorious event, “and while they looked steadfastly towards heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into

heaven." It was no wonder that, after such comfortable news, "they returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

Christ's second and glorious coming is a joyful event to all the saints. They ardently prayed for it, crying "even so, come, Lord Jesus!" They show forth his death till he come again; and, when grace is in exercise, they have an eye to it in their whole conduct, "looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the day of God," and "seeing that they look for such things, they are diligent, that they may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless." Many reasons concur to make his second appearance matter of joy to his people:—It will be greatly for the honour of Christ himself; he will come in his own and his Father's glory, attended by angels, and admired in them that believe: Israel will be redeemed from all his troubles: Christ's enemies will be made his footstool: death and hell shall be cast into the lake: in his human nature he shall judge the quick and dead: his kingdom, as to its present mode, will be delivered up to his Father, and God will be all in all, and rejoice in all his works together.—We now go on to make some application, and

1. This subject informs us, that in every dark and trying dispensation, the Christian should wait upon the Lord. He brings light out of darkness, and order out of confusion: he makes crooked things straight: these things he will do for his people, and not forsake them. It was truly a dark and trying dispensation to the disciples, when Christ was on the cross and in the

grave; but at Bethany, the Lord made darkness light. There he discovered his design, and satisfied them that “what did not seem joyous to them a little before, now yielded the peaceable fruits of righteousness.” Though the Christian should be in the worst situation, and all God’s waves and billows pass over him; when admitted to the mount of communion; and favoured with nearness to God, he gets such views of the divine procedure with him, as *always* lead him to submission, *often* to satisfaction and contentment; and *sometimes* to glory in tribulation. If such are the happy effects of partial manifestation here, how will the light of glory discover the propriety of all God’s ways with his people, and make them say, “He hath done all things well!” Therefore, they should wait upon him, for “at evening time it shall be light.”

2. We may also learn the vast happiness of all who have been admitted to intimate fellowship with Christ, and have received the blessing. We justly account the blessing which the disciples enjoyed at Bethany very great. Laying aside some circumstances, the happiness of the Lord’s people, when his face shines upon them in duties, may greatly correspond to, and nearly equal, that of the disciples. *They* saw him ascend; every believer knows that he is entered into glory. *They* got the blessing; and this honour have all the saints. *They* had intimate fellowship; so has the believer, when the Lord shines upon his soul and intimates that he is pacified. *They* were ravished with the thoughts of their Master’s kindness; so is every saint, when admitted to

much nearness, and says, "Is this the manner of man, O Lord!" The disciples looked up with wishful eye, desiring to follow; the believer in his happy frame, by the eye of faith looks within the veil, and says with Job, "I loathe it; I would not live always," and with Paul, "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." In short, except witnessing the ascension of Christ, there was little valuable at Bethany, but what may be had in all places where the Lord blesses his people.

3. This subject sets the greatest encouragement before all gospel hearers, whether they be saints or sinners. It is not for nought, that we are told that Christ went away in the act of blessing. It is left on record to encourage us to make application to him: we may be assured, that he is as much disposed to bestow the blessing now as when he ascended. If any waters could have quenched his love, it would have been extinguished before he ascended. We have many proofs that there is no change in his love since he entered into glory. There was none a few days after, when he poured out the Spirit. Stephen found none, when he saw Christ ready to receive his soul. He appeared equally amiable and ready to bless, when he spake to Saul of Tarsus, and bestowed the blessing on him, though a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. John, too, in Patmos, found him equally concerned about his church and people, as when he leaned on his bosom at supper, or when Christ was parted from the disciples at Bethany. Every saint should apply for every blessing which he needs, firmly persuaded that he is willing to bestow.

The greatest sinner may apply with confidence, trusting to Christ's gracious declaration, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." To this day no instance can be adduced of a single individual who applied in vain to an ascended Lord for the blessing. No, all who, like the publican, have cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner," with him have gone away *justified*.

4. We may learn the character of worthy communicants. They are such as have *already seen Christ, and had a prior acquaintance*. As Bethany was not the first place where Christ and his disciples met, when he lifted up his hands and blessed them; neither should communicants, strictly speaking, begin their acquaintance with Christ at the supper. Christ should see them under the fig-tree, before they come to the sacrament of the supper to receive the seal of the covenant. Like the disciples, too, they should be such as have *been blessed before*. These blessings every person should possess before sitting down at the Lord's table: his sins should be blotted out, and he should have change of raiment: stript of the rags of his own righteousness, he should have on the wedding garment: his nature should be changed; the reigning enmity of his heart broken, and love implanted. The invitation is addressed to friends. Possessed of these blessings, like the disciples, they should come expressly seeking greater degrees and new intimations of the blessing.

6. In fine, we may see the happy privilege of every gospel hearer. You are come to the place where Christ dispenses his blessings. It is his express pro-

mise, Exod. xx. 24, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." If you have not come for the blessing, your end is wrong; and if you go away without it, the blame must be your own. He is as willing to bless now, as at Bethany. The gospel itself is a great outward blessing, and the very design of it is to propose, offer, and communicate the great blessings of the covenant of grace; and we are called to ordinances to seek these blessings, and to take actual possession. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Christ and you are not yet parted. If you now refuse him, he may be parted from you to-day, and strive with you no more. If you die without the blessing, there will be an awful and eternal separation between Christ and you, when he will pronounce that dreadful sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." But if you are wise, and receive the blessing, Christ and you will meet, an happy meeting; "nor time nor death shall ever part you more."

As for you who are his people, if you suitably improve your privileges this day, you will leave this place making the following comfortable reflection: He led us out as far as this precious ordinance, and lifted up his hands and blessed us, and we worshipped him, and returned to our houses with great joy!

SERMON II.

1 CORINTHIANS XVI. 22.

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha.

LIGHT and darkness will as soon agree as real religion with contempt of, or enmity to, Christ. With infinite propriety is he denominated the believer's all. Many pretend to much religion, and speak of their eternal salvation, either with great hope, or affected certainty, and make a great figure in the church, who are altogether ignorant of Christ's person, unacquainted with the importance and value of his death, ashamed of his cross, make light of his gospel, and neglect his great salvation. These must be in a fatal mistake; for all who have not a superlative love to Christ are accursed.

In every period the doctrine of grace will meet with opposition, whithersoever it is sent; and the strongest endeavours will be used to seduce the church: but the Lord has always raised up instruments to counteract error, defend the truth, and establish his people; and his care of Zion will be unceasing. Corinth was pestered with seducers. These, with the utmost assiduity, laboured to prevent the success of the gospel. They employed all their art both to pervert the faith of those who had already believed, and prevent others from receiving the

doctrines of salvation. Against these Paul warned the Corinthian church with plainness and fidelity. Though none of Christ's enemies can justly be excluded from the curse denounced in the text, yet Paul seems to have had these false teachers, and their votaries, very particularly in his eye, when he said, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha."

When a church or any of her members err greatly, and reproof is necessary, it should be tendered with love, and much mildness. Although there were many corruptions in the church of Corinth, Paul was so far from indulging his own spirit, that none of his epistles are concluded with more love. But the greatest tenderness to the weakest church member, overtaken in an error, must never prevent faithfulness to the great Head. Such as are open enemies to the Redeemer must be warned of their danger with the utmost plainness, for his honour, their own safety, and the benefit of others. With whatever meekness Paul treated church members under their failures, he sharply reproved the enemies of the Redeemer, and said, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha." It is not unworthy of notice, that the curse denounced against such as love not the Lord Jesus, is placed in a very conspicuous part of the epistle, and written by the apostle with his own hand.

Though such as love not Christ are warned in the most pointed manner, they often continue at ease, speak peace to themselves, and put the evil day far away; and, because sentence is not speedily executed

against their evil works, their hearts are fully set in them to do evil. Because they neither see nor feel divine wrath, they will not believe; and think all is well, especially if they make a profession of religion. But, though there should be no visible tokens of God's anger seen about them, there is a secret unseen curse hanging over their heads, which, if inflicted, will prove as efficacious to drown them in perdition as if a millstone was hanged about a man's neck, and he, in this manner, cast into the sea. The curse is contained in our text, "If any man love not Christ, let him be Anathema."

What will be further necessary for explaining these words will gradually occur, as we open up their import in general; the particular nature of the curse denounced against such as love not Christ; and show that it is most reasonable.

I. It was proposed to open up the import of the words at large; and among other things the following seem to be implied.

1. The high esteem which God and the saints have of Christ. There is no way of evidencing a greater esteem of any person, than when we cannot suffer another to touch him with impunity. It is certainly an undoubted proof of the greatest regard to another, when we consider every thing which is prejudicial to him as equally so to ourselves. The words in our text may, with propriety, be considered as spoken by God, and a full proof of *his* love to Christ: Paul consents so cordially, that they also may be viewed as

his, and are expressive of his superlative love to the Redeemer.

God has the highest esteem of Christ. He had so from eternity. No language can more forcibly express the complacency which God had in him, especially when he engaged to be the surety of sinners, and was a lamb slain from the foundation of the world, than the words of Christ himself, Prov. viii. 23—32, “ I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths I was brought forth : when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled ; before the hills was I brought forth. While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens I was there : when he set a compass upon the face of the depth. When he established the clouds above : when he strengthened the fountains of the deep : when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment : when he appointed the foundations of the earth : then I was by him, as one brought up with him ; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him : rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.” The Father gave the highest evidence of his love to Christ in the designation of him to the great office of Mediator. Often did he express his love to him under the Old Testament. In all the typical sacrifices he had peculiar delight, as they pointed out the great atoning sacrifice to be offered up in the end of the world. With infinite

complacency he spake of him in prophecy as his servant. Isaiah xlii. 1, "Behold, my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." He also evidenced his love to the Redeemer when he sent the heavenly host to celebrate the joyful news of his birth. Luke ii. 13, 14, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." His love was equally attested at Christ's baptism, when the Spirit descended as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The same honourable testimony was borne to him on the mount of transfiguration. God took every possible method to give the most undoubted proof of his love to the Mediator, both when he was on the cross and after it,—when he raised him from the grave, and exalted him with his right hand. In every period of the church he supports his interest, takes vengeance on his enemies, and faithfully accomplishes what he stipulated in the counsel of peace, as mentioned Psalm lxxxix. 20—30. "I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him: with whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him. And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. But my faithfulness and mercy shall be with him; and in my name shall his horn be exalted. I will set

his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven." Every believer may learn the Father's high esteem of Christ from the acceptance he meets with for his sake; and if sinners only knew how highly God esteems Christ, they would not think so lightly of him and his gospel. In one word, how can God more emphatically express his love to Christ than in the words of the text, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha."

Paul made these words his own; and such is the love of the saints to Christ, that they cordially join with the apostle. They have made deliberate choice of the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. Willing to sell all for the pearl of great price, they count every thing loss that they may win him. They deny themselves, and take up the cross, and follow him. They trust him with their most important concerns; and all their expectation is from him. His truths are precious in their esteem; and his friends, in their eyes, are the excellent ones of the earth. They say to his enemies, "Depart from me, ye evil-doers."

2. That love to the Lord Jesus is the beginning, essence, and amount of true religion. It must, surely, be something very important in Christianity, the want of which incurs the awful sentence in the text.

Religion cannot begin without love to the Redeemer. If all proper exercise begins in knowing him, he needs only to be known that he may be loved! We do not mean that love is prior to faith, or even any other grace, in the order of nature. When faith apprehends Christ, it apprehends him as a most lovely object, and the person believes with the whole heart. Faith works by love, and purifies the heart. *Love is the very amount of religion.* To love the Lord with all the heart, is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love constrains to the performance of every duty, and makes the saint cheerfully undergo every hardship. All who love the Lord, hate every false way, and press after conformity to him in holiness. Loving him, they pant after communion with him, here and hereafter; and improve every opportunity and appointed mean. The Scripture lays the greatest stress on love to our neighbour, and gives it a very distinguished place in the exercises and attainments of the saints. 1 Cor. xiii. 1—4, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.” “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, but the greatest of these is love.” Love to Christ is

not only of equal importance, but is the spring and source from which love to our neighbour flows; while, on the other hand, love to our brother is the surest evidence of love to the great Head. 1 John iv. 20, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" Love to Christ is the great criterion by which we may judge, with safety, of our liveness and spirituality in every duty, and of our attainments in religion. The great and leading question which Christ asks all who profess to follow him, and which they should ask at themselves, is that thrice put to Peter on a memorable occasion, "Lovest thou me?"

3. That the want of love to Christ subjects to the curse, as well as positive enmity with all its dreadful effects. It is not said, If any man *hate* Christ, but if any man *love him not*, let him be Anathema. We do not mean that there can be want of love without positive enmity. These are inseparable, or rather different degrees of the same thing; and there is no medium between loving and hating the Redeemer. The Holy Spirit expresses himself in this manner to warn all, and assure them, that though their opposition to Christ may not have discovered itself to others, or have been felt by themselves, yet if they have not positive love to him, they perish with his worst and most avowed enemies. Many deceive themselves by thinking that they do not hate Christ, because they never felt hatred to him *boiling* in their hearts, similar to that passion, which breaks out when they reckon

themselves injured by their neighbour, and think they do well to be angry. But they should remember, that they as little feel the fire of love inflaming their hearts, and working with that ardency which love to a creature often produces, when it excites to use every mean for the enjoyment of the beloved object. They cannot speak of Christ in the language and with the affection of his spouse, "HIM whom my soul loveth;" and as little do they feel "the zeal of his house eating them up."

As the curse is here denounced against the *not loving* of Christ, it is very remarkable that the execution of it in the last day, of which we have an account, Matt. xxv. proceeds in the same manner and on the same grounds. Christ does not say, I was sick and ye endeavoured to make me worse; I was in prison and ye cried, away with me, and crucify me. They are condemned for the *want* of what they ought to have had, and for *not doing* what they should have done. The evidence will be summed up in the same manner about loving and not loving his members. Thus he addresses the righteous, "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me;" and thus the wicked, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." Therefore, when want of love is proved, the verdict is *guilty*, and the sentence, "Let him be Anathema."

4. God, in pronouncing sentence against such as love not the Lord Jesus, is no respecter of persons. If *any* man love not Christ, let him be accursed. God has no respect to any of these outward distinc-

tions which bulk so much with the men of the world. If *any* person is found without love to Christ, whatever outward advantages he may have, he is sure to be condemned. Though he should be a man of shining talents, and say with others, "Lord, Lord, have I not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" Christ will reply, "I never knew you, depart from me ye workers of iniquity." Though he should be "a man under authority, having many under him, to whom he says, Go, and they go; Come, and they come;" yet, if he loves not Christ, his greatness and authority will avail him nothing: "Though he should fare sumptuously every day," if he is without love to Christ, "in hell he shall lift up his eyes." On the other hand, if *any* man loves Christ, though he should be in the extreme of poverty and distress, and have no help of man at all, and only the dogs to lick his sores; yet, he shall be blessed, and an embassy of angels deputed to carry his soul into Abraham's bosom: but if, while poor and distressed, he is without love to Christ, possessing the spirit of the rich man without his fortune, he shall share the same fate in the other world; and his being starved in *this*, does not prevent his being damned in the *next*. Christ too, with his eyes as a flame of fire, will search Jerusalem, and see through the hypocrite's cloak, which covered and concealed, from the eyes of others, a naughty heart without love to the Lord. In short, let a man be ever so learned and wise, great or rich, possessed of more goods than his barns can contain; or let him be

ignorant as the veriest fool, or poor as Lazarus, with nothing to cover his back or fill his belly, still none of these outward considerations cast into the scale would be of any weight. The turning point is, if he has or has not love to the Redeemer; and if he loves not the Lord Jesus, his doom is *Anathema*.

5. That the gospel should always be preached with *certification of the danger* of neglect or despising it. In this epistle, Paul sets before the Corinthians the precious truths of the gospel very fully. He opens up Christ as “made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;” and the doctrine of the cross as “the power and wisdom of God.” The great ordinance of the supper is opened up in its nature and ends: the great and leading doctrine of the resurrection is largely explained, and the consolation arising from it clearly pointed out. Duties are set before us, and urged upon us, and especially the great duty of believing. And to *certify* them of their danger, and assure them that they cannot escape if they neglect the great salvation, Paul, with *his own hand*, in the *end* of this epistle, sets up as a standing and conspicuous beacon, the awful words in the text.

In every part of Scripture, we find that other faithful teachers also pointed out the danger of despising Christ. Moses, when near the end of his life, said, “I have set life and death before you, the blessing and the curse.” Most explicit was Christ himself in giving warning, “He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.” As God in his word gives faithful warning, the watchmen on

mount Zion ought, with fidelity and impartiality, to set the danger of sinners before them. They should say to the wicked, however great and mighty they may be, that it shall be ill with them. This is the appointed mean to prevent their bringing destruction on the sinner, and blood on their own head. The charge given to Ezekiel ought to be often studied, and carefully reduced to practice by all who are ambassadors for Christ. Ezek. iii. 16—22, “The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word of my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity: but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity: but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, when a righteous man turneth from his righteousness, and doth commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling-block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned: also thou hast delivered thy soul.”

6. A proper profession of love to Christ, not contradicted by the practice, is the grand criterion of

church communion. This was a direction and warning to the church. Unfeigned love to Christ includes some knowledge of his person and work, and that there is no salvation in any other; and it will not always lie dormant in the heart, but appear more or less in the life and conduct. Love to Christ and the want of it are two powerful principles, the one for producing, and the other for preventing and opposing holiness. When the church cannot see convincing evidence of want of love to Christ in those who apply for admission, and where there is some knowledge and a scriptural profession, she ought to judge charitably. But where there is a positive opposition to his doctrines, where his laws are trampled under feet, and no love to himself appears, as was the case with the false and seducing teachers at Corinth, the church ought not to receive such into communion, and bless with the seal of the New Covenant, when the great Head says, "Let him be Anathema, Maran-atha."

7. Once more, by the rule of contraries, these words imply the blessedness of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. If there is something, the want of which infallibly entails misery, they must be blessed who have it. If all who want love to Christ are under the curse, and exposed to wrath; they are surely blessed who love him. Yes, one thing is needful to happiness, and every lover of Christ has chosen the good part which cannot be taken away. The believer was originally an enemy, a child of wrath, and under the sentence in the text; but the enmity of his heart has been broken, he has been made willing in a

day of power, and adopts the language of Isaiah, "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song, he also is become my salvation." Great is the happiness of every lover of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is blessed now. He is in Christ, and there is no condemnation. He can never fall under the wrath of God. There may be much wrong in him, and much done by him, that deserves condemnation; but being justified by God, he will never fall under the curse. Amidst all the vicissitudes of time, one thing is certain, that though the peace which God has given may be interrupted, it shall not be utterly taken away. Infinitely comforting are the words of Christ, John v. 24, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." He who loves the Lord Jesus is interested in all the blessings of the covenant of grace, and shall have them infallibly dispensed according to his necessity. In every situation of life he is blessed of the Lord, and death will be great gain. The whole paths of the Lord will be truth and mercy, and all things shall work together for his good. In one word, we may say concerning his blessedness here and hereafter, with the apostle, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."—We proceed,

II. To open up the import of the curse denounced in these words, “Let him be Anathema, Maran-atha.”

In general, considered as spoken by God, these words are a denunciation of his wrath and curse. As spoken by the apostle, they are an imprecation containing a prediction that divine vengeance will follow all who love not Christ, and expressing the earnest desire of his heart that it may be so. In this desire every believer heartily joins. It is all one whether we view them as God’s denunciation, or his people’s imprecation of deserved wrath: if God had not denounced vengeance against his enemies, the saints never would have ventured to pray that it might be poured out. Both ways they express the sin and danger of all who love not the Lord Jesus. We have many instances of such imprecations in the Psalms; and the song of Deborah is concluded with a beautiful example of praying for complete destruction to the Lord’s enemies, and an accumulation of happiness to his people. Judges v. 31, “So let thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.”—This phrase imports,

1. The *greatness* of the punishment. God’s curse is weighty, and his wrath is great beyond conception. Moses was sensible of this, and knew the improvement to make of it when he said, Ps. xc. 11, 12. “Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” The punishment inflicted on God’s enemies is expressed many different ways in Scrip-

ture, all designed to point out its greatness. It is called eternal death; a being turned into hell, and dwelling with devouring fire and everlasting burning. Christ often spake of it under the idea of the worm dying not, and the fire not being quenched. And the apostle uses great variety of phraseology to point out the greatness of that punishment which awaits the Lord's enemies, as may be seen in most of his epistles.

The punishment must be great, if we consider that it is *exactly proportioned to the crime*: and who can conceive how criminal it is to oppose and reject HIM “who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;” and all this for sinners, that they might be saved! As it is the great commandment of God that we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, rejecting him, of all sins, is the most dishonouring to God, and draws down the most dreadful wrath on the sinner; for “this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” It tramples under foot the love of all the persons in the Godhead, as displayed in the work of redemption. But great as the sin is, the punishment will be in proportion. We need not hesitate about this; for God will exert all his perfections to inflict upon his enemies condign punishment. His wisdom will determine the punishment, and his almighty power will inflict it: his holi-

ness and justice require it; and his faithfulness and veracity render it certain.

On this theme the sacred writers copiously insist, that sinners may be warned to fly from the wrath to come. The best way to become acquainted with the greatness of that punishment is, carefully to consider what God hath said. It must surely be very awful to be cast into fire prepared for the devil and his angels; to be everlastingly with that accuser and tormentor, whose cruelty is unrelenting; to have life itself continued as a curse, and eternally suffer divine wrath; to be deprived of every comfort, down to a drop of cold water to cool the scorched tongue! Heaven is *all* consolation, and hell is *wholly* torment, according to the words of Abraham to the rich fool; when applying for the small boon of a single drop of water: "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus his evil things: but now he is *comforted*, and thou art *tormented*."

2. The *certainty* of the punishment. Every word of God is true, and his threatenings will be as faithfully executed as his promises will be accomplished. If God's word could fail in the least article, he could not be trusted in any thing: "but he is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" His universal infallible truth and veracity is the grand foundation of all trust and worship. If it could be supposed that God would vary from what he has said, so as to become either better or worse than his

word, he would no longer be a proper object of that faith and trust, that honour and obedience, which he requires of us. There is scarcely any thing about which the enemies of the Lord Jesus deceive themselves more than the certainty of future punishment. They allow, and partly believe, that God has threatened awful punishment against his enemies; but they indulge a secret belief that his threatening never will be executed, and that he will not be so severe as he has said. Many fall into an opposite mistake, equally great. Through fear, and a sense of sin, they apprehend that God will not be as merciful as he has said. Let God be true, and every man a liar. He will neither be better nor worse than his word. As all the happiness which he has promised will be faithfully bestowed upon his people; and they will have the best reason to say, "Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord our God spake concerning us: all are come to pass:" so every degree of punishment found written in his word will be faithfully inflicted on his enemies: "Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot shall in no wise pass away till all be fulfilled." Hell is as sure as heaven; and to be banished from heaven is in itself awful punishment: but it is as *certain* as awful; for when God says, concerning such as love not Christ, let them be accursed, they shall be ANATHEMA, MARAN-ATHA.

3. That at the coming of the Lord there will be an awful and serious reckoning between him and such as loved him not; and that the sentence will then be fully executed. *Maran-atha* is a Syriac word,

and signifies the Lord will come. The enemies of Christ, and all who despise him, are much inclined to put the evil day far away; *but the Lord will come.* Though they should always escape till that period, they shall escape no longer, and dreadful vengeance will overtake them.

The coming of the Lord is absolutely certain. While that event is frequently asserted in the Old and New Testament, it is worthy of notice that both are finished with an express assurance that he will come. Emphatically does Malachi speak of it: "For behold, the day cometh—the great and dreadful day of the Lord, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up." And Christ himself, the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, concludes his testimony to the Church in these words: "Surely I come quickly, Amen." The doctrine of Christ's second coming was early taught in the Church, for "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all that are ungodly," &c.; and it will be continued to be taught till he actually come.

When the Lord comes he has a twofold work to accomplish, both parts of which are expressed. Isai. xxxv. 4, "Your God will come with vengeance against all his enemies; and he will come and save you." Indeed, it is a very important branch of his work, to have "these his enemies, who would not that he should reign over them, brought forth and slain before him;" and none of them shall escape,

for “ his hand shall find out all his enemies ; and his right hand shall find out those that hate him. He shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of his anger : the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.”

Then the Lord will call his enemies to an account, and reckon with them. All their privileges and opportunities, every invitation and offer of Christ, will be called over before them. They will be put in mind how frequently he urged them by his servants, and strove with them by his Spirit. The arguments, urging them to believe, from their danger if they did not, and their happiness if they did, will be clearly set before them. Their contempt and making light of the Gospel ; their misimprovement and neglect of every privilege ; and their heart-hatred of Christ, and his great salvation, will be fully disclosed. Conscience will be instead of a thousand witnesses, and will anticipate, and justify the sentence. All excuses will be in vain, and condign punishment will be inflicted !

Then, in sad experience, will they understand such Scriptures as these, which they often heard before, and as often despised : “ And that servant which knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.” Luke xii. 47, 48. “ Wo unto thee, Chorazin ! wo unto thee, Bethsaida ! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But

I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you," Matt. xi. 21, 22.

A most pitiful thought it would be, should it occur to any, that if the reckoning be *only* when the Lord comes; it is a long time to his second coming. "A thousand years are with the Lord as one day, and one day as a thousand years;" and he hastens his coming. It must be remembered, however, that while he will reckon with every enemy *then* before an assembled world, he *comes at death*, and reckons with every individual, and settles the business *unalterably*; for as the tree falls so it must lie. The rich man died, was *instantly* reckoned with, and in hell he lifted up his eyes.

4. That the punishment at Christ's coming will be *exactly according to his word*. The Lord warns his enemies now, that when he comes they shall be accursed; and when he actually comes, their punishment will be no more, no less, and no other than Anathema. A wise and righteous lawgiver never threatens one punishment and inflicts another; and far less will the Judge of all the earth. He threatens nothing less than hell and the curse; and nothing more will be inflicted. Sinners may lay their account with the curses which he has denounced in his word; and a supposition that these will be lessened, or altered, can only proceed from unbelief and Satan. The canon of Scripture is concluded with a declaration of the greatest severity against the man who would attempt, either to take from, or add to the plagues written in his word—expressive that such conduct is highly

criminal; and to imagine that God himself could be capable of it, is blasphemy. This declaration we have, Rev. xxii. 18, 19: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." These verses express on the one hand, the perfection and sufficiency of the sacred volume for pointing out the remedy, and warning every man of the danger of neglecting it; and on the other, the great zeal of God that it be not corrupted by the traditions and inventions of men. When God inflicts partial judgments or chastisements upon a professing people, he commonly warns them; and they find them exactly according to his threatening. His declaration in Hosea vii. 12, will be found to be, in general, the pattern of his dispensations: "I will chastise them as their congregation hath heard." If these partial strokes exactly agree to his word, his great procedure at the last day will equally correspond to that rule. In the firm persuasion of which Paul said, Rom. ii. 16, "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ *according to my gospel.*" Many express a strong desire to know futurity, and especially the transactions of the great day, and eternity. If they are in earnest, they should search the Scriptures. "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them; and if they will not hear them, neither will they be

persuaded though one rose from the dead." Though sinners hate, and pretend to disbelieve, the Lord's word, their consciences are secretly convinced of the truth and propriety of it: of this they give full proof when death stares them in the face. *Then* conscience speaking with authority, and acting in concert with the word, begins to pronounce the sentence, and even partly to execute it. Conscience tells them they have not loved Christ; then, self-condemned and taking with the charge, they conclude, I must be Anathema, Maran-atha.

5. This phrase strongly implies the *eternity* of that punishment which is denounced against, and will be actually inflicted upon, all who love not the Lord Jesus Christ. If they are accursed when the Lord comes at death or judgment, there never will be the least alteration to eternity. The day of grace may sometimes be over in this life; but never extends beyond it. The period in which God strives either by means, or his Spirit, is limited to this world. As he does not *always* strive here, he *never* strives hereafter. Many have objected against the eternity of punishment. The truth and propriety of this might be well enough argued from the nature and demerit of sin, and the inability of the sinner to make any satisfaction for his past offences, or stem the torrent of corruption. Such as love not the Lord Jesus *here*, can never love *hereafter*. Enmity reigns in their hearts; and though they were to rise from the dead, they would still be his enemies. Under the weight of the curse contained in the term ANATHEMA, "they go away into *everlasting* punishment." According to the meaning of

this word in the Hebrew language, to eternity they are an *accursed thing*, which can have no fellowship or communion with God.

6. It also implies, that so far as these who love not Christ, discover their true character by outward apostacy from, or direct opposition to, HIM or his cause, instead of being cherished in the bosom of the church, they ought to be looked upon by her as execrable and detestable, as the word anathema literally signifies. It is a long time since Balaam said, How shall I curse whom God hath blessed? The church may with great propriety invert the question, and ask, How shall I bless, with my most solemn privileges, such as God evidently curses? There is nothing that can be more ruining to the church than to retain in her bosom, and neither censure nor exclude, the known and avowed enemies of Christ, and his precious doctrines. We have the spirit and temper of Paul on this head, expressed in the most forcible manner, to the Galatians, chap. i. 8, 9, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed." There he expresses his great zeal for the gospel, and the danger which the Galatians incurred by listening to, and indulging among them, the inveterate enemies of the cross of our Lord Jesus, and justification by his imputed righteousness. Such enemies ought to be excluded from her communion *with a view to the salvation of the soul in the day of the*

Lord. Zion ought to aim at keeping all Christ's ordinances pure and entire, and should "not give the children's bread to dogs." But all means ought to be used with them to acquaint them with their true situation, the loss they sustain by not being in communion, and their great danger if they were admitted in their present condition.

III. We proceed to point out the grounds of this imprecation, or show that it is most reasonable, that "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he be Anathema, Maran-atha." Upon this it is as impossible to say enough, as it is unnecessary at present to say much. The following sentences may suffice.

1. Christ deserves the highest love from all to whom he is offered in the gospel. The most opposite extremes are united in his person. He is the most high God in human nature, and possessed of infinite excellence. The majesty of his divinity, which might overawe the sinner, is made amiable and accessible in the man Christ Jesus. He undertook to be our surety, and stood in our room from all eternity. In the fulness of time, "as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham," and with this view, "that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, in things pertaining to God, to make recon-

ciliation for the sins of the people." If these things do not in the highest manner deserve the love of every gospel hearer, men and angels can never conceive what will. Therefore, where love thus deserved is wickedly refused, most justly is the person accursed.

2. While Christ infinitely deserves the love of gospel hearers, he does much to procure it, and gain the heart to himself. He sets before them what he did from eternity, when he said, "Lo, I come;" and what he did in time, when "he was set forth a propitiation in his blood." The benefit of his merit, and all his blessings are not only offered to them, but pressed upon them. He points out the folly and unprofitable nature of their conduct in relying on any other object for salvation, and says, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." He sets life and death before them. He freely offers life, and complains when they will not come to him that they may have it. In doing all these things he is at great pains, rising up early, and sending his servants. With a feeling heart he says, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes;" and if they still refuse, he laments over their loss, saying, as in Luke xiii. 34, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is

left unto you desolate!" If after such means, pains, and unwearied entreaty, gospel hearers continue *not to love*, but hate Christ, it is *most reasonable* that they be *Anathema*.

3. Law and gospel agree that he who loves not our Lord Jesus Christ be accursed. The law says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." It denounces punishment against every sin; and the great sin of enmity to Christ will not escape, as it is a breach of the first and great commandment.

The gospel exhibits salvation to the worst of sinners; but, if the only remedy is neglected, there remains nothing "but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation."

It is the very essence of the gospel to exhibit Christ as the remedy, as the apostle says, Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Thus the curse must either fall on the sinner or the surety. The merciful declaration of Christ is, "that he came to bear their sins in his body on the tree, and make his soul a sin-offering in their stead," and bestow his righteousness upon them. Refusing to consent to such gracious proposals, the sinner must continue under the curse: and many stripes are added for the aggravated guilt of rejecting the Saviour. To all their former sins they add the crucifying of Christ afresh; and so are filled with their own ways. In a very different, and higher sense than the apostle's, may Christ, with infinite propriety say, I not only could wish myself accursed, but actually was so for

my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh. And all who reject Christ may justly be addressed in these words, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish!"—It remains now to make some application.

1. This subject points out in the strongest light the stupidity, blindness, and degeneracy of human nature. There can be no greater proof of our depravation, than to be indifferent about, and enemies to, such a lovely Saviour. We are enough ready to esteem what appears beautiful, lovely, and excellent, *except in spiritual things*; where, instead of valuing, we have the greatest aversion and enmity to every thing truly worthy. Our affections cleave to the dust, and spiritual objects are neglected. Christ himself is esteemed as a root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness, and we see no beauty in him why he should be desired. We spend our labour for that which doth not profit, and the sure mercies of David are disregarded, though sweet, nourishing, and precious as wine and milk. The means of grace are a weariness, and we long for the Sabbath being ended, that, without the appearance of restraint, we may sell and buy, and transact our worldly business. Things insignificant, and even wicked, are engaged in with heart satisfaction; while the Lord's word, which testifies of eternal life and brings it near, is neither relished nor improved. How is human nature sunk! How dreadful is sin, which blinds our minds, and makes us call good evil, and evil good! "The crown is fallen from our head: wo unto us that we have sinned!"

2. We may see how little a practical belief of the Bible prevails. Were the awful sentence in the text, and similar threatenings, firmly believed, men could not live and enjoy themselves as they do, while their conduct ascertains that they are under the curse. Alas! the greater part could not give less evidence of love to Christ, though the text had run thus, If any man love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha! They are as eager in worldly pursuits as if they were to live for ever, and as careless about soul concerns as if there were no hereafter. These things are a sad proof of the latent atheism and unbelief which work powerfully in the human heart. Many undoubted proofs have been, and might be adduced, that the Scriptures are divine, and yet they are treated as a cunningly devised fable and an idle tale.

3. That divine threatenings, however severe they may appear, are a great mercy. There scarcely can be a greater mercy than fairly to warn men of their danger. Were any person about to fall headlong from the brink of a precipice, no kinder office could be performed than to warn him of his danger, and use every possible mean to prevent his ruin. Sinners are on the brink of eternal ruin. While out of Christ, there is nothing between them and hell but the breath of their nostrils. The gospel, preached with such certification of danger as we have in this text, warns every man. It points out our bane and antidote. When such as love not Christ are pronounced accursed; it is like the call given by Lot to his sons-in-law, Gen. xix. 14, "Up, get ye out of this place; for the Lord

will destroy this city:" and it is to be lamented, that often the most faithful warnings have no better success: "he seemed to them as one that mocked." If there is great wrath in this curse, gospel hearers have the more need to consider, and lay down the weapons of their rebellion. While this and such texts stand in the Bible, sinners, in a land of light, can never pretend that they are not properly warned: if they read, they are warned; if not, they increase their sin by neglecting that which is at once their duty and privilege. All who are now hearing, must recollect that they are expressly warned; for, if any man in this assembly love not Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha.

4. This subject further informs us, that while all who love not Christ are guilty of great sin, the hypocrite is a sinner of peculiar magnitude and deep die. In common with others, he has all the ill of not loving Christ. He has the superadded ill of lying to the Redeemer, and mocking his omniscience. He honours him with the lip, but the heart is far from him. He betrays him with a kiss, and wounds him in the house of his friends. While the conduct of the hypocrite is awfully heinous, it is equally absurd. If it is not a good thing to love Christ, why do you profess it? If it is, why do you not practise it? You now affect a superior degree of holiness to many of your neighbours, and shun the common crowd of Christ's enemies as too wicked for you. Matters will alter. Hereafter, if you die in your present situation, the common damned will shun your society as fiend less foul. Bethink yourselves. Hypocrites have the chief

place in hell. Your character is odious on every hand. God hates it, and so do his saints. Sinners too hold the character of the hypocrite in abhorrence. He is odious to the former, for pretending to be what he is not; and to the latter, for what he pretends to be.

5. We may learn too, how few real Christians there are. If such love to Christ be essential to a Christian, as makes all who possess it give him the preference to every other object, and renders every thing about him, even his cross, most precious; real lovers of Christ are very few. Were we to survey the characters of true love to the Redeemer, we would soon find that there are few possessed of it. It is a superlative and sincere love, and makes all who have it, prize and embrace every mean and opportunity of enjoying him. Viewing such as profess Christianity, we will find some giving the chief place in their heart to one object, some to another; and only a very few to Christ.

6. Again; we may see the propriety of the solemn ordinance before us. The supper is a signal proof of Christ's love to his people, and an eminent mean of inflaming their love to him. At his table, eating his flesh and drinking his blood, *they remember him*—who he is—and what he has done—and they remember his love more than wine. Recollecting the night when he was betrayed, the bloody scene that followed, and that all his sufferings were for them; they cry out, “Behold, what manner of love!” and love begets love. Through the influences of his Spirit, “they sit under his shadow with great delight, and

his fruits are sweet to their taste;" and often "they are sick of love." He has promised his gracious presence to all his ordinances; and often at his table, his "disciples are glad through seeing the Lord."

7. We may also see who will be worthy communicants at the table of the Lord this day. Surely not these who do not love him, and are accursed. That any service may be acceptable, the person who performs it must first be accepted; but if any man loves not Christ, he is accursed, and not worthy to sit down at his table. Unto such wicked persons God says, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take" the seal of "my covenant in thy mouth." The passover and the Lord's supper both commemorate a great deliverance. It would have appeared very strange in Pharaoh, continuing still in the same mind, to have gone and eaten the passover in an Israelite's house. However custom may render people blind or inadvertent, it is equally absurd for a sinner, persisting in his sin, and destitute of love to the Lord Jesus, to sit down at his table. He has no interest in the Saviour, or the fruits of his death. He has no love to his person, or finished work. He is an entire stranger to his righteousness and grace, his spirit and salvation, and an enemy to them all. If the sinner is for heaven at all, it is on the plan of the covenant of works; and what can such a person have to do with the seal of the New Covenant!

Those only will communicate worthily, who love Christ above all, desire an interest in his person and righteousness, and can say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire

besides thee;" and about the covenant, the seal of which they are to receive, with David, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire."

Intended communicants, and especially such as have the deepest concern, fully sensible that love to Christ is essential to a worthy partaking of the Lord's supper, will be ready to say, "I have been endeavouring to look into my heart, but I cannot satisfy myself about being possessed of genuine love to the Redeemer: I find my heart so cold to him, and the power of indwelling sin so strong, that I am afraid of being mistaken in imagining I have any love at all to that glorious Person whose death we are about to commemorate."

Nothing can be of more importance to communicants than to have this matter comfortably settled. You ought to do much in secret, and we in public, to make you acquainted with your own hearts. To enable you to determine the great matter about loving or not loving Christ, we would beseech you to think on the following questions.

Do you recollect a time when you thought but little about Christ, and cared little whether you loved him or not? Are matters now in some measure changed? Is it your chief concern both to love him, and to know that you do so? Are you fully sensible that, separate from him, you can do nothing, and must perish? Are you persuaded that love to him is a great privilege, as well as a great duty? Are you impressed

with the amazing greatness of his love to sinners? And do you think these the only happy persons who are interested in him, even while you cannot claim this privilege as your own? Though you cannot say in express terms that *you* love Christ, is it the desire of your hearts that *others* may love him, and especially your friends and relations? Little love as you may think you have to him, could you easily part with it? Do you feel yourselves careless and unconcerned when his name is dishonoured, his day profaned, his ordinances neglected, and his people undervalued or persecuted? While you cannot satisfy yourselves about the reality of your love to Christ, do you often look into your hearts, and examine and prove if that principle be in them? Are you absolutely sure that you think much about, and tremble at the danger of not loving Christ? And do these words sound like thunder in your ears, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha?"

But still the poor believer says, "I cannot find that powerful principle working in my heart as I would desire." Recollect, O believer, that love to Christ is the fruit of the Holy Ghost; that he produces it by means; and that the supper is an eminent mean; and go forward to his table pleading the accomplishment of that precious promise, Zech. xii. 10, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as

one that is in bitterness for his first born." That kindly sorrow will fill your soul with love to Christ. You must also set forward fixing the eye of faith on that most full, absolute, and suitable promise, Deut. xxx. 6, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."

We cannot conclude without beseeching and entreating all in this assembly, to love that glorious Person who laid down his life for sinners. He calls you himself and says, "My son, give me thine heart." Many motives might be used to bring you to comply. Passing others, we shall only mention, that you are called to love, not a poor mortal like yourselves, not one who is unworthy of your love, or has not deserved it; but you are called to love the Lord of glory, who hung on the cross for sinners, and in his exalted state still invites and beseeches you, and who has the power of your life and death in his hand.

Recollect also, that you are called *only* to love him, that is, to think well of him, to receive salvation from him, and to desire communion with him, to take complacency in him, and breathe after the eternal enjoyment of him. You are not called to great hazard and danger, but *only* to love him. When he loved you, his love cost him his life—he had *to love and die*; but when you love him, you *love and never die*. A pleasing question which he himself asked, "Who-soever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?"

If possible, to prevail with you, and bring you to love him, meditate much on what he will do for you.

All your sins shall be blotted out; you will be blessed here, and have what is good: hereafter, you will be happy beyond conception to all eternity. But if you will not love him, you must be miserable. He will say at the last day, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire;" and he now warns you plainly, while he assures you that, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, he will be Anathema, Maran-atha."

SERMON III.

LUKE XI. 13.

If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children ; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ?

FAITH holds a distinguished place among the Christian graces, and prayer among the duties. Without faith no other grace can be exercised, and without prayer other duties are performed in vain. A proper acquaintance with the nature of prayer would tend to remove our backwardness to that duty, and incline us to engage in it. Suitably performed, it is most advantageous to the Christian; and like a well-fitted key, opens the rich storehouse of divine mercy. It confers the highest honour and dignity, as it introduces us into the presence of God, and admits to immediate intercourse with him. A believing application to the throne of grace, is the source of great sweetness and consolation to the Christian. It mitigates his sorrows, delivers from distraction, and quiets the mind.

This great duty was often the subject of discourse, both when Christ spake publicly to the multitude, and privately to his disciples. With a view to engage them in this duty, he opened up the nature of

it, pointed out the advantages, and directed us to the manner of performing it. Above all things, it was his aim to bring them to faith and importunity. He spake a parable to this end, that men should pray always and not faint. While, with authority, he enjoined them to pray, he encouraged them by his example. If that duty was so necessary and useful to *him* in his humbled and tried state, it could not but be necessary and profitable to *them*.—At this time he had been praying, and his disciples enjoyed the amazing privilege of hearing the eternal Son of God applying to his Father in their behalf, and joining with him. Listening to such gracious supplications, their hearts could scarcely fail to be affected, and filled with a desire for the spirit of prayer, that they also might have such intercourse with God. They entreated him to teach them to pray; and, where no motive was necessary, urged the example of John. That gracious heart, which inclined the Redeemer to be the great Prophet of his church without any solicitation, and made him improve every opportunity of being beneficial, led him to comply with the request; and he taught them to pray. Having, with wonderful propriety and precision, pointed out the amount of all the petitions which they needed to send up to God, and the proper order in which their addresses should be presented; he proceeds to open up the vast encouragement. That this might make a proper impression, he adapts it to their apprehension, and argues from a double similitude.

The first is that of friendship awakened by importunity, and pressed on by necessity, which admits of

no denial, and cannot be refused. This is beautifully expressed from verse 5, "And he said unto them, which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves: for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, trouble me not: the door is now shut; and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." But lest any should doubt, and hesitate about this as absolute severity that their prayers should be heard, and argue that friendship may be forfeited, wax cold, and be broken off; his second similitude contains, if possible, a still more powerful argument. It is taken from the love of a father to his child applying to him for food; and though one friend should prove unkind to another, the bowels of a father will be tender and affectionate to his own child, and neither deceive nor disappoint him. We have this from verse 11, "If a son shall ask bread from any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" The text is the application of the second similitude; and words can neither express, nor imagination conceive, higher encouragement, or more conclusive reasoning. God is not only our friend, but our father; and what can unbelief itself object to this gracious assurance, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto

your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" This encouragement is of universal application, and every person must feel the force of it. *Some* are parents, and well acquainted with strong natural affection, and feel continued inclination to supply the wants of their children. *All* once were children, and can recollect how they looked to their fathers with anxious desire for supply, and strong confidence that they would not be disappointed.

In opening up these words, we propose

I. To speak a little of that importunity in prayer spoken of in the context, and about which Christ gives the gracious encouragement in the text.

II. To open up the encouragement itself.

III. To show who may, with confidence and propriety, take the comfort of it; and then subjoin the application.

I. It is then proposed to speak a little of that importunity in prayer about which Christ gives the gracious encouragement in the text.

1. Importunity in prayer is a combination of gracious affections working in the heart, and flowing out to God in fervent desire for the blessing. There is an infinite difference between pertinent expression, and importunate desires. Many address God in such language as awakens the affections of others, while

their own hearts are cold and frozen. These only, who are experimentally acquainted with importunity, can form any proper idea of it; and even these cannot express what they feel. The Scriptures give various descriptions of importunity in prayer, both to open up the nature of it, and make the tried saint know that others have been reduced to equal extremity. It is called a wrestling with God, and refusing to let him go without the blessing; a stirring up ourselves to take hold of him, and giving him no rest; never holding our peace day nor night, and not keeping silence; a pouring out the heart, and laying it open before God.

It is often exemplified: Jacob wrestled; Moses cried; and David roared, and made a noise. Christ himself was most fervent and importunate "in the days of his flesh, when he offered up prayers, and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death." It is altogether opposite to cold, languid desires, and heart wandering. The soul collects herself, brings every faculty into action, and with united energy, makes fervent application to God. With the eye of the mind fixed on the blessing, the importunate believer strongly desires it; his hope is filled with expectation, and faith urges the divine promise. The affections unite with the other faculties of the soul, and all that is within the believer is stirred up to seek the Lord.

2. This importunity, in every instance, flows chiefly from a sense of need. This is evidently supposed in the instances adduced by Christ. Application is made at midnight by a friend for loaves, because a

traveller of his acquaintance had stopped at his house, and was in need, not only of refreshing sleep, but of something to eat after the fatigue of his journey: he had nothing to set before him, and therefore must have some loaves. Absolute necessity was the only plea for troubling him at such an unseasonable hour. A young child has nothing of his own, and depends on his father. Gnawing hunger makes him cry, and the father gives him food convenient for him.

In the nature of things, necessity chiefly produces importunity. Abundantly supplied at home, the rich never think of begging at his neighbour's door. The sinner, who "is rich and increased in goods, and standing in need of nothing," will never make importunate application to God. From the throne of grace God has nothing to give to a sinner except GRACE, an article invariably despised by the rich, and esteemed only by the indigent. It is a feeling sense of this which makes him apply with fervency for that mercy which is rich and free.

The same sense of need which brings the sinner at first to the throne of grace, in every after period keeps him at it. The saint, who is emptied from vessel to vessel, will be the most fervent and importunate. When David was reduced to the greatest straits, he was most fervent in prayer. When Paul was buffeted by the messenger of Satan, he besought the Lord thrice. When the saint is at ease, and waxes fat, he is ready to forget God; but pinched anew, he cries as in months past. One reason why the Lord keeps his people poor and needy is, because

he wants to hear often from them, and maintain fellowship; and in the opposite situation they would be estranged. It is not meant to divest *love* of every degree of influence on the soul in her importunate addresses to God. Love constrains to the performance of duty; but the believer's love is commonly so languid as to stand in need of the powerful motive of necessity to co-operate in giving life and vigour to his faint and languishing desires: and at his first application he always feels the force of need powerfully driving him to God, before he is acquainted with the influence of love sweetly drawing him.

3. Importunity in prayer must always be learned in Christ's school. John taught his disciples; and Christ taught his. We must know from the word that it is allowed, and we can learn only by the inward revelation of the Holy Spirit how to reduce it to practice. It is Christ's design in this passage to acquaint us with the nature of importunity, and open up the encouragement which sinners have to apply to him. It is amazing condescension in him who is rich, not only to supply the poor, though at the expense of becoming poor himself, but to instruct them to apply to him, and teach them *the art of begging*. Many methods has Christ taken to instruct sinners in the duty of prayer. The whole word of God is of use to direct us. Taken in bulk it is a revelation of grace, exhibiting a God of grace to the sinner as a suitable portion, and of easy access. Distributed into its different parts, the divine word teaches the exercise of prayer. Sometimes it commands it; and at other times threatens the neglect

with condign punishment. He who calls us to pray without ceasing, assures us that all the nations that forget to seek God shall be turned into hell. The history of the saints affords many valuable lessons about the necessity and success of importunate prayer. The promises set before us the blessings to be sought, and the encouragement we have to apply for them. Divine ordinances, like Christ and John, still teach men to pray, and often they have been so blessed, “that he who came to scoff, remained to pray.” Providences also, and especially afflicting dispensations, are designed to acquaint us with our need, and bring us to importunity. At our wit’s end, brought low, and cast into the depths, we cry to God, and in our afflictions we seek him early. God’s usual way is, to bring sinners into the wilderness, and *there* allure them.

Besides, Christ seconds his external instructions with the inward efficacious teaching of his Holy Spirit. He impresses the sinner’s heart at first with the evil of sin, the weight of the curse, the danger of hell, and his own inability to do any thing for deliverance; and thus brings him to cry for mercy. In all the Christian’s journey, the Holy Ghost impresses his mind with a sense of his absolute need of this and the other blessing—of his inability to break the power of sin, oppose temptation, perform duty, extricate himself from extreme difficulty, or vanquish death. Thus impressed, he feels that he cannot do without God, and says, “My soul, wait thou only upon God: for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock, and my salvation; he is my defence: I shall not be

moved." Thus, in his first and future applications, unable to help himself, and disappointed by all the creatures, the language of his heart is, as in Psal. cxlii. 4, " I looked on my right-hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me ; refuge failed me ; no man cared for my soul. I cried unto thee, O Lord ; I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living. Attend unto my cry, for I am brought very low ; deliver me from my persecutors, for they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name."

4. It is highly pleasing to God. We cannot hesitate about this when we recollect that it is taught by Christ. The duty concerning which *he* gives outward instruction, and which *he* makes effectual by his *Spirit*, must be acceptable to the *Father*. There is no duty which Christ urged more frequently when in this world, or the nature of which he more explicitly and carefully explained ; which is a full proof how much it honours God, is acceptable in his sight, and how beneficial it is to men. It is the believer's great resource, and ever at hand ; and the right performance of every other duty will stand or fall in proportion to his fervency at the throne of grace.

We are commanded not to draw near with the lips only, but to honour God with the heart ; and importunity proves that prayer is heart-work. The fervent wrestler will hang about God's hand, like the child about his father, refusing to let him go. Importunity glorifies the divine perfections. It can appeal to God's omniscience about sincerity, as it pours out the heart before him. It reflects honour on his goodness

and benevolence, as it will not go away without the blessing. It eminently magnifies his faithfulness, as it embraces the promise, holds it fast, and must have it accomplished.

The very wrestling of believers is acceptable to God. Though he perfectly knows all their wants and complaints, yet he listens with complacency to the voice of their supplications. He has such pleasure in the fervent exercises of his people, that no believing cry is unobserved; every sigh is noticed, their secret groanings are before him, and he puts their tears in his bottle. Nothing is sweeter in his nostrils than the fervent prayers of the saints: they are the production of his own Spirit, the operation of his own grace, and the application of his own children crying, Abba, Father: they are supplications for blessings which he delights to give. They are the means of drawing down mercy to the sinner, and raising up the heart to God. They are valuable articles sent to heaven beforehand, there to be turned into eternal songs of praise.

5. Importunity in prayer will certainly prevail. This is often expressly asserted in Scripture. Hear the Lord's own words, Isa. xli. 17, 18, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." Also chap. xlv. 19, "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain." David, knowing that God's

name was the Hearer of Prayer, said all flesh should come to him, and he came himself, believing that he “will regard the prayer of the destitute.” No words can be more explicit than these in the chapter where our text lies: “And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

It is the very design of the text to give us gracious assurance that importunate prayer will prevail; and it is given in a remarkable and forcible manner. Christ does not give us a bare intimation, or hopeful insinuation, that there is a probability of success, as in Zeph. ii. 3, “Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment, seek righteousness, seek meekness; *it may be* ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger:” or in Joel ii. 14, “*Who knoweth* if he will return, and repent, and leave a blessing behind him.” These are what we might call *kind hints*, or *half promises*. But in the passages quoted above, and many others, the assurance that prayer will prevail is expressed in promises which are full, absolute, and most explicit. Faith relying upon these, can do wonders. *In the text Christ goes farther.* He proves, by the most convincing arguments and clear demonstration, that prayer shall prevail. He contends with our unbelief, and disputes with our fears; and in such a way that if we have any faith, we might almost say, sense or reason, we must be shut up to believe that God will hear our cries. The

manner in which Christ assures us might have been introduced in these words, “*Come, and let us reason together*;—If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

The same truth is taught in a similar manner in that parable, Luke xviii. which he spake that men should pray always, and not faint. There was a certain judge who neither feared God, nor regarded man. A poor widow, oppressed with her foes, applied to him for deliverance, and sought to be avenged of her adversary. Equally a stranger to justice and pity, he continued deaf for a long time. Though every higher motive was without influence, at last, “because this widow troubleth me,” said he, “I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.” With infinite propriety and force does Christ argue from the prevalence of the widow’s continued application to one of such a *wretched character*, to the certain success of the saints’ application to a *merciful and loving God*, who spared not his Son, but delivered him up for them all, in the following beautiful and comfortable question and answer: “And shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night to him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.”

II. The next thing in the method was, To open up the encouragement to importunity in prayer set before us in the text. This may be divided into two

branches : first, These words are full of encouragement *as spoken by Christ* ; and, secondly, As containing *in themselves* a most gracious assurance of success.

First, we have great encouragement to prayer, if we consider these words as spoken by Christ.—Here we may observe the following things :

1. When the poor and needy hear any thing which appears to encourage them, they justly reckon it of great importance to know who said it, and on what grounds. The case is the same with the man who feels himself spiritually poor. When the awakened sinner, or the dejected saint, hear of any thing apparently for their comfort or encouragement, they ardently desire to know if there is any truth in it, and if the speaker be a person of known veracity. For this, among other reasons, the divine message by the inspired writers is often introduced in these words, so much calculated for confirmation, “ Thus saith the LORD.” Christ proceeded on the same grounds when he introduced himself thus, “ Verily, verily, I say unto you.” The encouragement in this text is spoken by one who neither could nor would deceive. Christ was sent of God as the great teacher, to reveal the Father’s mind, and was equal to the work, having been in his bosom from all eternity. Thus qualified, he could with precision declare what the Father was willing to bestow on all who would apply to him. He is the faithful and true Witness, and came to declare that eternal counsel between him and his Father, in which every thing was adjusted concerning the various blessings to be bestowed, the manner in which they should be conferred, and the time of communicating them.

The words of Christ may be depended on; and to give them their just weight, we should carefully remember who and what he is. He is the true God in our nature. Though equal with God, in order to atone for sinners as their High Priest, and teach them as their great Prophet, he took their nature upon him, and in common with the rest of the children was a partaker of flesh and blood. Great was his love to his disciples, and he always declared to them what was infinitely for their advantage. Thus they had the highest reason to take encouragement from the assurance in the text as the words of their best friend. Justly here, as elsewhere, might he say, "Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding: my mouth shall speak truth, and the words of my mouth are in righteousness."

2. These words afford great encouragement to prayer, if we consider them as spoken by Christ *in his state of humiliation*. Then he was a pattern to the believer, who must be in this world as Christ was in it. When he affirmed that the Father would give the Spirit to such as ask him, he spake from experience. Under all his sufferings, he applied to Him for help; and was heard in that he feared. Once he declared, that had he prayed to his Father he would have sent him legions of angels; and he always had whatever his lips did crave. Christ himself had great need for the Holy Ghost. He was unparalleled for greatness of sin by imputation, for peculiar temptations, arduous work, and extreme sufferings. Under all these, every thing he did and suffered was through the eternal Spirit bestowed by his Father.

We have the same encouragement to ask the Holy Spirit which Christ had. He and his people are one. While God is his God and Father, he is the God and Father of every believer in him. The promises of the Spirit, and other blessings, are the same to him and to us. They were all originally made to him. They are sealed in his blood, are yea and amen in him, and flow to sinners with the strongest confirmation. In this view the text is as if Christ had said, "I stand greatly in need of divine influences; I have applied to my Father for the Spirit; he has heard my cry: in this as in other things I have set you an example: be sure to follow the same course, and you will experience the same success; for the Father himself loveth you."

3. They are very encouraging as spoken by Christ when he was opening the only channel in which the Holy Spirit and his influences could flow to sinners. He was then working out that righteousness which removed all the obstacles which prevented the effusion of the Holy Ghost. All the children of Adam had contracted a debt of obedience and suffering which they could never pay; and being guilty, they lay under the curse. God will by no means clear the guilty. Two cannot walk together unless they be agreed. In this situation it was impossible that God could pour out his Spirit, or confer any saving blessing. In his love the Lord Jesus assumed our nature, stood in our place, and paid our debt. Divine justice being thus satisfied, and the law magnified, saving blessings flow to sinners with facility, propriety, and continuance, as streams from a fountain.

This channel Christ was now opening. It was opened in his eternal stipulation. It was more visibly opened in the typical sacrifices; and he was now walking through the land of Judea as “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.” All his sufferings were a part of that righteousness which he finished on the cross. His bloody baptism was ever in his eye and his heart. Well might he assure his disciples that his Father would give the Spirit.

In figurative language he was at that time fitting out the ladder which opened the communication between heaven and earth, and on which not only the angels ascended and descended; but on which the Holy Ghost descended to take possession of the hearts of sinners, and implant his grace; and on which he would make their fervent breathings after spiritual blessings ascend, and their souls also at death, conducted by himself and under the tuition of angels. Thus employed, with great propriety might Christ assure them that, if they would ask, they would receive the Spirit, especially as he always taught them to pray in his own name, saying, “Whatsoever,” from the greatest blessing to the least, “ye shall ask in my name, I will do it.”

4. They afford great encouragement, if we consider them as spoken by Christ, when he and his Father were directly and immediately giving the most illustrious and incontestable proof of love and faithfulness. When God had “sent his Son into the world, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons,” there was the highest reason to conclude that he would also “send

forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father." When Christ had actually come, and in the likeness of sinful flesh was undergoing a life of sorrow and suffering, we might with certainty conclude that no *other* blessing was too great for us to ask, or God to bestow. In this manner did the apostle argue, Rom. 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?" The death of Christ is every where justly mentioned as the most illustrious display of divine love: thus reasons the apostle, Rom. v. 6—10, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Could such an extraordinary event be found among men, as a person dying out of generosity for another, still it would fall infinitely short of Christ laying down his life for sinners. The apostle John asserts the same thing in his first epistle, chap. iv. 10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Justly might Christ assure them that they would receive the Spirit, when he made this assurance in his human nature in the land of Judea. The force of his reasoning is, If the promise of God's sending his Son into the world has been fulfilled, no other promise

can fail. In a particular manner the promise of sending the Spirit cannot fail, because Christ's coming and death would be of no avail without HIM. Sanctification is as necessary as justification; and in vain is redemption purchased unless it be powerfully applied. It is as if Christ had said, "As sure as you see me here actually come in the flesh; as sure as my Father sent the Holy Ghost at my baptism, when he descended like a dove and rested on me: as sure will he give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Without him, my work and the Father's purpose of love would be of no avail: and to the end of the world, because I have been in it making an end of transgression, the Holy Spirit will be given to them that ask him."

5. They are full of encouragement, as spoken by Christ upon a special and appropriate occasion. Every word he ever spake was calculated to minister grace to the hearers. He always spake in a manner becoming his native dignity; but his word at certain times deserved the highest attention, and should never be forgotten. He had been employed in addressing his Father for the blessings which he stood in need of for himself and his members. Prayer being ended, application was made to him by his disciples that he would teach them to pray. They had not only their own souls at stake, but were to teach all nations the method of salvation. On this important occasion he taught them that form of prayer recorded in the foregoing verses, which was to be of standing use to the end of the world. This prayer has always been justly admired, and often explained. Then he declared

this encouraging promise of the Spirit. It is as if he had said, " You want to be taught *how* to pray : the sum of all that you need is included in these six petitions : let them be revolved in your mind, and sent up to *our* Father : you will often find yourselves in a frame of heart by no means suited to these petitions ; and will be tempted to give over the great duty : to bring you to a suitable frame of heart, to make your faith and affections in some measure correspond to your language, and to enable you to resist every temptation to give over or faint, I conclude my instruction concerning prayer by assuring you that my Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

6. They are most encouraging, because, while spoken by Christ, they may also be viewed as the words of the Father, and Holy Spirit himself. Often persons who interest themselves about soul concerns are apt to think well of Christ, but more harshly of his Father. A gloom pervades their mind when they think on the Father pouring out his wrath on his own Son, and giving him up to the death ; but they allow that the love of Christ is beyond doubt and above parallel. It might occur to the mind, especially in a desponding hour, that the encouragement would have been complete had the promise of the Spirit been made by the Father himself. The express voice of Jehovah the Father could not in the least degree have increased the encouragement. Christ and his Father are one. The Father bore honourable testimony to his Son in all his services and suffering ; and especially at Jordan and the mount of

transfiguration. Christ himself is the everlasting Father, as well as the Child given. Whatever is the express promise of one of the Persons in the adorable Trinity, is not to be considered as promised by that one exclusive of the other two; but every promise made by a Divine Person is to be considered as one single act of the Divine will, which is the same in all the three Persons in the Godhead.

Thus too they are the words of the Holy Spirit himself. They are left on record by his inspiration. In this view he either promises himself, or concurs with Christ in this comfortable assurance, as he was a concurring party in that great transaction in the counsel of peace between the Father and the Son. Once more,

7. These words cannot but be encouraging, as Christ had a certain and proper claim to the influences of the Holy Spirit as the reward of the great work which he was now carrying on, and was soon to finish. He had an indisputable title to every article pertaining to eternal life, according to the terms of the everlasting covenant entered into by him and his Father. If he could say with propriety, "I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me;" He might also say, I will that they may have the Holy Spirit poured out upon them to prepare them for that glorious sight. Leaving the other parts of this subject to another opportunity, we shall conclude with the following reflections:

1. This subject informs us how much we are indebted to Christ. In him God is reconciled. Through

him the Holy Ghost flows to sinners. In him we are accepted and brought into the relation of children. He has purchased some blessings, and opened the channel for all. The promises stand sure in him. He instructs us in the nature of prayer, and answers every believing petition. He opens up the unspeakable encouragement which sinners have to apply to the throne of grace. He invites and beseeches gospel hearers to receive his righteousness and salvation.

2. We may also learn how inexcusable gospel hearers are if they continue without the Spirit. He is promised to them that ask him, and in the most absolute and unconditional manner. We have the strongest assurance that the promises will be accomplished to all who make application: Christ hath opened the channel, and the Holy Ghost actually comes near, in word and ordinances, seeking admission into the heart; and if he does not enter, it is certain he is quenched and refused. Believers might have greater measures of the influences of the Spirit; but they grieve him through security and carelessness.

In fine, we may see the amiable character in which the Gospel exhibits God. He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father in him. We should come with confidence. If sinners cannot call him their own Father, they may apply to him as the Father of Christ. We shall apply to him in this endearing character, which would mightily tend to beget and increase faith, love, and hope. We should revolve in our minds the bowels of a father, and never forget

that, were the love and affection of all human parents collected into one breast, still the love of that person would be cruelty, compared with the love and tender mercies of our heavenly Father.

SERMON IV.

LUKE XI. 13.

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children : how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Spirit to them that ask him ?

WE can never look into the sacred page, but we will find encouragement to the *chief* of sinners, and consolation to the *least* of saints. Dreadful as the malady of sin is, the Scriptures exhibit an adequate remedy. Christ, the eternal Son of God, is there set forth crucified before us. He is offered to all, and it "is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save the chief of sinners." The Gospel is still what it was proclaimed to be at the incarnation of the Saviour, "Glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Christ is able to save to the uttermost : and the vilest miscreant that ever applied to him was not rejected. The divine word is replete with consolation to every saint. It proclaims, as with a loud voice, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people !" Time cannot unfold, nor eternity exhaust, the strong consolation provided for believers. While many texts are filled with consolation, words can scarcely convey greater grounds of joy than these in this, "If ye then, being evil,

know how to give good gifts unto your children : how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Spirit to them that ask him ?” They convey ideas congenial to the human heart ; and we can scarcely hear the sound without feeling the force of the sentiment.

Having said something concerning that importunity in prayer which will be successful, we have already entered upon the encouragement to fervent prayer offered in the text. It was divided into two branches. The text is filled with encouragement, considered both *as the words of Christ* to his disciples, and as they contain, *in themselves*, a gracious assurance of success, when saints apply for the Holy Spirit to their heavenly Father. Having discussed the first of these, we now proceed to the second ; and we will find the most convincing arguments, that, if we seek the Holy Spirit, we shall not seek him in vain.

The following are a specimen of the grounds of faith contained in the text, which, when believed, will produce consolation.

1. Other children are supplied by *their* father, and *your Father* will surely supply you. The relation between the father and the child is one of the most endearing, and the dependance of the child upon his father is natural. Depraved as human nature is, there are comparatively few instances of cruelty in a parent to his own offspring ; but there are many instances of an excess of fondness leading to improper indulgence. It will commonly be found that the heart of the father inclines him to do all he can to provide for his children, and make them as easy and comfortable as possible. The Lord often uses

this figure to express *his* love and care, and encourage *our* faith and trust; and seems to delight in it. By creation the whole human race are his offspring, and with infinite propriety is he called the Father of spirits. He is the Father of saints in a more noble and excellent sense. They receive Christ, and are adopted into God's family; for "as many as received Him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." This is a most dignified relation, and "is an act of God's grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God." And "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." They are his children too, as they are espoused to Christ, and "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Except they were born anew, they could by no means enter into the kingdom of God; but they are begotten again unto a lively hope, and are all born of water and of the Spirit.

No creature, not the highest angel, is related to God in such a near and noble sense. The relative change in adoption, and the real in regeneration, are both produced in a wonderful manner, and at vast expense. Seen in a proper light, they fill the heart with wonder, and make the saint exclaim, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God!" Supposing an earthly parent, possessed of all the qualifications which can be found in fallen man, or even of all created excellence; still he would be only a faint emblem of the goodness of our heavenly Father. If

a child, actuated by his own, and persuaded of his father's affection, applies to him for what he needs, without hesitation or doubt, much more may the Christian believe that his "God shall supply all his wants." That astonishing love which moved God to constitute the relation through the death of his own Son, will, without controversy, make all his conduct to the saints such as becomes the most tender-hearted father. "The young lions may lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

2. Other parents are *evil*, and yet know how to give good gifts to their children; your Father is *infinitely remote from all evil*, and is goodness itself, and therefore will give the Spirit to them that ask him. Earthly parents in their natural state have nothing spiritually good, and yet, from affection, supply their children. The holiest saints, while in this world, have much remaining evil about them, and yet make strong exertions to perform every relative duty, and especially to provide for their children. That evil which is in men, as it is total or partial, makes them in proportion *blind*, and *ignorant of what is good*; but, in the language of the context, they can still distinguish between bread and a stone, a fish and a serpent, nourishing food and powerful poison. Infinitely more will Divine wisdom perfectly discern what would be beneficial or baneful to the saints, and dispose God to bestow the one, and preserve from the other. *As evil*, earthly parents are possessed of a *selfish* disposition, and sometimes do, and are always liable to, fail in parental duty. The sluggard prefers his own ease

to the happiness of his child, and, not providing for his own, often reduces them to beggary. Where either the life of a parent or his child is in the balance, sometimes the parent prefers his own life to that of his child. We have heard that "the hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children to be meat," in an awful calamity. Selfishness is infinitely distant from God, and it would be blasphemy to ascribe it to him in the least degree. Without solicitation, and from all eternity, his thoughts were occupied about providing for his own. He chose them in Christ, and secured their happiness in his glorious purpose. He parted with what was dearest to him that they might be saved. The eternal Son came from the bosom of the Father, and the sword of justice was sheathed in *his* bowels, that *they* might touch the sceptre of mercy. In the great impending calamity of divine wrath, his life went for theirs. As God spared not his Son, neither does he spare any pains that they may be brought to Christ, and their spiritual happiness promoted. From eternity he prepared mansions for them in heaven, which, after their momentary afflictions are ended, they shall inhabit to all eternity. *As evil*, men *may* do wrong, rather than right, and *may* act from improper motives. They may caress when they should correct, and "chasten after their own pleasure," without a single eye to the benefit of the child. God always acts from motives worthy of himself. He never errs either about mercy or trial. He never mistakes the one for the other, or sends a disproportionate measure of either. He *never* afflicts willingly, and *only* when there

is a *need be*, and *always* “for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.” By a wonderful conjunction of wisdom and love, he takes the sting out of afflictions, and makes them mercies, so that “all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.” As in a well mingled potion every ingredient joins to give virtue to the whole, that the salutary effect may be produced; so all things in the believer’s lot are measured out with infinite propriety, and jointly work together for his good. *As evil*, there will always be a *tincture of cruelty*, and “a woman may forget her sucking child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb;” and some will always be found “without natural affection;” yet, in general, earthly parents will give good gifts to their children. *God is good*, and we may apply to him with the strongest confidence for all we need.

The reasoning here is most conclusive: if persons, with so much evil about them, know to give good gifts to their children, infinitely more will the Lord, who has not the shadow of these ills, give what is good to his people. “He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry; he taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those who hope in his mercy.” Every tender-hearted parent, and every loving and beloved child, must feel the force of this reasoning. The child knows with what love and unshaken confidence he applies to his father; and the father with what complacency he supplies his child.

3. Earthly parents, though evil, are moved by the *helpless and needy situation* of their children, and their

application for relief; much more will your Father be attentive to your fervent and importunate cries.

Children, when they come into this world, can do nothing for themselves; and without the care of others would perish. God has implanted strong affection in parents for the preservation of their offspring. The child, by looks, signs, and language, as soon as capable of them, expresses dependance on his parent, and every expression is a powerful claim on the Father's love, touches his heart, and makes him endeavour to supply the wants of his child. The parent's eye beholding the helpless situation of the child, affects the heart, and the cry for pity and relief moves his bowels.

Never did the sight of misery move the human heart so much, as God was moved by the foresight of the deplorable situation of his people from eternity. He thought on us in our low estate, and provided ample supply. In time, the sight of our actual misery has inclined him to supply our wants, and grant deliverance. Often he has said, "I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them." Believers, knowing this, have often prayed with David, "Look upon mine affliction, and my pain, and forgive all my sins; and look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto these that love thy name."

If the sight of misery and want touches the heart of our Father in heaven; every cry of the believing soul is a strong claim upon him for deliverance. It is the cry of absolute need (I am poor and needy.)

It is the cry of hope rejecting every other quarter, and seeking relief from God alone. The godly are encouraged in this application, by his love, grace, and faithfulness pledged in his promises. While the Lord is ready to help, he has infinite complacency in the very prayers of his people, when they pour out their hearts before him. If then an earthly parent, though evil, is affected with the wants, and listens to the cries of his children, much more will God take notice of all the wants of his children, and answer their cries, especially as these cries are sent up in Christ's name, under the direction, and by the aid and influence of the Holy Spirit.

4. Other children apply for something to support *the natural life*; you apply for support to the *spiritual*. Earthly parents can only provide effectually for that life which may perish after the most suitable and abundant supply of bread or of fishes; and, at best, can only continue for a few years. No doubt all professing parents should, and some will, have a greater concern for the eternal than for the temporal welfare of their children; but Christ in this text has the natural life and its support chiefly in his eye. If earthly parents will make such vigorous exertions for a life which may come to an end in a moment, and, at most, can only be of short duration; much more will a God of grace make suitable provision for the spiritual life of his children, which is endless as eternity. Besides, the natural life may be spent in Satan's service; while the spiritual is glorifying to God in every stage here, and will bring a perfect revenue of glory to him hereafter. To hurt, or not promote as far as possible,

the natural life would prove the parent hard-hearted, and reflect on him for want of affection; but it would reflect infinitely more on the love, grace, and faithfulness of God not to perfect the good work which he has begun in the hearts of the saints. If God did not give every thing necessary for the hourly preservation, and daily increase of the life of grace, Satan, and other enemies, would say, that he had forsaken the work of his hands, either for want of love to his people, or because he was not able to introduce them into the Land of Promise. Earthly parents, if they could, would preserve the life of their children, and would prevent that bitter sorrow that arises from the death of a first-born. All that believe in Christ, and are the children of God, shall never die, and natural death, which is more properly a falling asleep in Jesus, brings them to that land where death never enters, and where life is in perfection. We have many and strong assurances that God will keep the believer every moment, preserve his soul in life, give every thing necessary for spiritual nourishment, and bring it to perfection at last: for he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;" and we may say, "This God is our God, and our guide to death; and though flesh and heart fail, God is the strength of our heart and our portion for ever: thus the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger."

5. It is also eminently for the encouragement of the saints that they apply to one who is their *heavenly Father*. Children often apply to earthly parents in vain. The supply sought is above their power. The

young child sinking under the power of disease looks with wishful eye, and lisps out his complaint to his parent: but in vain. Gladly would the father break the force of the disease, administer immediate relief, and restore health; but he finds it beyond his reach. The disease baffles medicine, makes rapid progress, and threatens immediate dissolution. Every look of the dying child pierces the parent's heart, and makes his pain as pungent as if he himself laboured under the disease. Often has a parent seen his child pining away for want, and "asking bread, and no one breaking it unto him." To have afforded supply would have been the joy of his heart, but alas he could not. Ejected from her master's house, Hagar heard the cries of her child, whom she had cast under the shrubs to die. Unable to witness the painful sight, she turned away, removed to some distance, and wept aloud.

With God all things are possible. No strait is too great for him. He is able to supply all the wants of his children, and they can never apply to him in vain. He is in heaven, and does whatsoever pleases him. No possible title can prove a greater antidote to unbelieving fears, or a greater help to faith and hope than that of "heavenly Father." The term *Father* secures affection and good will; and the character *heavenly* proves his almighty power. Inimitably beautiful, and unspeakably comforting, are the words of the Psalmist, "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widow, is God in his holy habitation." There is a conjunction of every thing encouraging to faith, or productive of comfort, in this title our heavenly Father. We are

not called to apply to him merely as Lord of Hosts, King of Glory, or Judge of the whole earth; but as our Father in heaven. The best of earthly parents are *fickle*, and *may* change. Their affection may abate, and often has abated, sometimes with, at other times without, provocation. Our heavenly Father is of one mind, and changes not. His love is immutable, and his power unabated. His ear is never heavy that he cannot hear the cries of his children, and his arm is not shortened that he cannot save and supply them; and therefore they may always apply with confidence.

6. We only add in the last place, that whatever encouragement children may have in applying to their earthly parents, believers have infinitely greater when they apply to their Father in heaven. This is implied when Christ says, "*How much more* shall your heavenly Father give the Spirit to them that ask him?" The saint has often seen the day when it would have comforted his heart, if he could have apprehended that there was the *very least degree* of fatherly love in God towards him. Recollecting the kindness of his earthly parent, and how readily he supplied him in his straits, it would have cheered his heart, and produced a ray of hope in his benighted mind, could he have, on good grounds, entertained the thought that God loved him *at all*, though *much less*, instead of much more, than his earthly father: but, impressed with a sense of his great guilt, and dreadful provocation, he is ready to apprehend that God cannot take the least favourable notice of him. In this sad situation, like the prodigal, he would be

glad to be treated as a hired servant instead of a son : but the gracious reception given to the prodigal justified Christ's expression when he said "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Spirit to them that ask him?"

Often during the Christian's course, as well as when he is first awakened, he would be ready to reckon it sufficient encouragement could he be persuaded that God had a degree of love to him *equal* to what he always found in his earthly father, to whom he never applied in vain for any relief which was in his power. He always found that the *least* hint and the *earliest* notice were enough to awaken the bowels of affection in his earthly father. He did not need to wait and plead with him ; but, reduced to great straits, and having made fervent application to God, and still not delivered, he is ready to say, as in Isai. xlix. 14, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Repeating his application, and still in great extremity, he exclaims, in the language of the same prophet, "Where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies towards me ? are they restrained ?" He cries out, could it be thus with me if God had love to me *equal* to that of my earthly father ! David, Psal. ciii. 13. set God's love in that proportion, and rejoiced in it, "*Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.*" But this text exhibits more grace when Christ says, *How much more.* Here is full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over beyond all comparison ; and how much beyond comparison none can tell. Whatever

way we turn our thoughts, with Christ we may justly say, *How much more!*

If earthly parents *know* to give good gifts unto their children, *how much more* does an infinitely wise God *know* what is good for his people? The wisest and most circumspect among earthly parents, however provident, may be, and often are, mistaken. Their wisdom falls short of their intention; and they hurt when they design to help. Like blind Isaac, they may do the opposite of what they intended. Our heavenly Father perfectly knows what is good for us, and what will directly promote our best interest.

As God knows infinitely better than our earthly parents, he is infinitely *more able* to supply all our wants. The creatures are poor, empty, and insufficient; but in our heavenly Father's house there is bread enough and to spare. He always says to his people, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." In one word, the love of an earthly parent bears no proportion to the love of God. The love of the creature is weak, languid, and cold, compared with God's. "GOD IS LOVE!"

Indeed the encouragement here is very great, and upon hearing it, persons, if not wholly unconcerned, will be ready to ask who they are that may take the comfort of it?—This leads to

III. Show who may, with confidence and propriety, take the comfort of the encouragement in the text.

1. Surely *every* believer may do it whatever his condition be. If he is high in faith and hope, and

not hesitating about his interest in Christ, neither will he doubt the love of his heavenly Father. But though he should have declined, and it should not be with him as in months past, still these words are filled with consolation. An earthly parent does not cast off or disinherit his child even for great offences, and surely the Lord will not forsake his people. Though sin should greatly prevail, the Lord foresaw every offence, and when he first bestowed his grace, where sin had abounded, grace did superabundantly abound; and believers, at their worst, may say with the apostle, Rom. v. 10, "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." The greatest sins did not prevent the first saving effects of his love, and they shall not obstruct the continued fruits of it. Though the Christian should be walking in darkness, and without light, still he should trust in God as his heavenly Father. The saint, at his worst, is in Christ, and possessed of his Spirit, and though his comforting influences may be suspended for a season, yet he remains in and with the believer. His love to God may abate and wax cold, but the Lord's love to him is unchanging. Thus lively or declining, strong or weak in faith, enjoying greater or less measures of divine influences, walking in darkness or in the light of the Lord's countenance, in prosperity or adversity, living or dying, the saint should take the comfort in this text, and believe that divine love infinitely exceeds the love of all or any of the creatures: and he should resolve and say with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," or

with the Church in a very dejected frame, "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; thou, O Lord, art our Father; our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting."

2. All may take the encouragement in this text who *aim at asking*. Christ says, your heavenly Father will give the Spirit to them that ask him. If they try prayer, though their language should be broken, and without any fluency; though they should scarcely be able to clothe their desires with language at all, or even to utter their groans, still they may take the comfort in the text. Though their prayers should be attended with much heart wandering, and in their own apprehension the effect of necessity, rather than flowing from faith or love: though with the publican they scarcely can lift up their eyes to heaven, still this text speaks encouragement to them. In brief, let their sins be ever so many and strong, let Satan suggest that they are the chief of sinners, yet if they have *any desire* for pardoning mercy, or any saving blessing, that desire in God's sight is asking, and he will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask.

3. All who are *needy* should consider the text as replete with comfort to them. As already noticed, the similitudes which Christ uses are drawn from necessity. Need made the man apply to his friend for loaves, and from the same principle the child asked bread. All mankind are poor and needy. They lost their stock in the first head, and are still squandering away their opportunities and privileges, in a country far from God and happiness, and *living* upon

husks ; if treasuring up wrath and hastening the worst of deaths be entitled to *that* name. The greatest part, however, have the superadded misery of being entirely ignorant and insensible of their necessities ; and therefore, will not ask supply. But if there are any so happy as to have their eyes opened to their true condition, and are sensible of their wants, this text is fraught with consolation to them. Some have such a sense of their needs, and see them to be so numerous, if not innumerable, that this in itself is apt to discourage them. But there is no alternative : either God must supply their wants, or they must eternally sink under the weight of them. Application to the creature for relief is wicked and vain. Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm. The creatures are broken cisterns, which neither have nor can contain water. God is the fountain of living waters. He is able to supply our every want. He has promised to do it, and he has revealed his promise that we may ask. The more numerous our wants are, and the deeper a sense we have of them, we should ask the oftener, and with the greater fervency. They will all be compensated by the Holy Spirit, and our heavenly Father will give Him to them that ask.

4. It is standing encouragement to *all* gospel hearers without exception. We may point it out as very applicable and comforting to different classes of gospel hearers ; but it must not be confined to persons of any particular description whatever. Sinners without exception hearing the gospel stand in need of salvation, the Holy Spirit, and every saving blessing ; and

these are set before them in the Gospel, and the Holy Ghost strives to take possession of their heart. What God offers, sinners may seek and take. If they seek and ask, they fall under the description in the last particular. If they do not ask they are most inexcusable.

Some object that the blessing here promised is *suspended on the condition of asking*. Supposing it were so, there cannot be an *easier* condition or *lower* terms. The beggar can ask when he can neither buy nor merit. All who are careless about asking, or consider the condition (as they call it) hard and impracticable, and on that account let it alone, are also careless about the Holy Spirit himself. A deep sense of need or great concern will make persons *try* to ask, without waiting to inquire whether they can ask in a right manner or not. But if it be still urged, that we are called to ask the Holy Spirit, and that we cannot ask any thing aright *till he be in us*. Though this be true, yet his help is not always to be expected, or depended upon *prior* to our aims at duty. The man who sits down determined to do nothing till the Spirit be poured from on high, awfully tempts the Lord. Beautiful and emphatic is the Divine direction, 1 Chron. xxii. 16, "Arise, and be doing, and the Lord be with thee." Though we cannot pray aright without the help of the Spirit, the obligation is still binding. Sinners *appear* to be in a sad dilemma: if they do *not* pray, they sin by omitting plain duty: if they *do*, their prayer is sin as performed in a wrong manner. Blessed be the Lord there is a *third* way.

They are neither under necessity to pray without the Spirit, nor to let it alone. They ought immediately to go to Christ and receive him; and receiving him the Holy Spirit will be given unto them.

If it be still objected, that it lessens the comfort when the Holy Spirit is promised only to them that ask, and asking made a condition; we would answer, that what is here promised on an *apparent* condition, is elsewhere promised in the most absolute manner, and without any condition, or the least appearance of it. Say, Arminians, on what condition is that promise suspended, Ezek. xxxvi. 25—28, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.” What is the condition of that precious promise, Zech. xii. 10, “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications?” Blessed be the Lord, the constant language of the covenant of promise is, *I will, and ye shall.*

Let men say what they will, it is an unspeakable mercy that the Holy Ghost is promised. We need him. We should ask him; and it is an unfailing source of consolation that our heavenly Father will

give the Spirit to them that ask him. We shall now conclude with some practical improvement; and from this subject we may learn,

1. The true nature of believing prayer. It is not that low and despicable exercise which some affect to call it. Many look on such as are often employed in this duty, as possessed of a vulgar and dastardly spirit. This text places prayer in its true light. *It is the application of the children of God to their Father, through Christ, for the Holy Spirit, the greatest of all blessings.* Was it ever reckoned mean or improper for children to apply to their father for what they stood in need of? And must the children of God alone be charged with whim, vulgarity, and madness, because they apply regularly to God Almighty for what they need, crying Abba, Father! Viewing prayer in this light, we may safely conclude that the excuses commonly offered for neglecting this duty are not the *true* ones. Instead of neglecting it for want of time, knowledge, courage, &c. men evidently disregard that duty because they are ignorant of their true situation, insensible of their need of the Holy Spirit, and enemies to his person, and his great work of holiness: they neither know nor love God as their Father, nor are concerned about the salvation of their immortal souls: and on these accounts prayer is not congenial to their hearts.

2. The happiness of all who are possessed of the Holy Spirit. He is the greatest gift which God can bestow, and contains the most valuable treasure in heaven or earth. He is God equal with the Father. The man whose heart he inhabits, has a true and real

propriety in God; and, so to speak, has power over him for every thing that is for the real good of his soul. The comforting language of the new covenant is, "I am thy God;" and the saint must be happy.

Besides, the Holy Spirit, where he is given, is a sure proof that many blessings *have been already* bestowed, and a certain pledge that every other *shall be* conferred in due season. He is a proof that the person in whom he dwells was chosen in Christ, and loved with an everlasting love; that he is justified, adopted, and born again. He is a pledge that all necessary grace, holiness, support, and comfort, shall be granted here; and that glory shall be conferred hereafter. He is the earnest of the inheritance, and an earnest of equal value with the whole.

3. The amazing power of indwelling sin. Nothing can break the power of unbelief, and other corruptions, but an omnipotent arm. The Holy Ghost alone can change the heart, quicken the dead soul, unite to Christ, implant or preserve faith, incline to prayer or any other duty, or bring to suitable performance. Naturally, sinners are without strength for duty, enemies to God, and under the power of Satan; and the Holy Spirit *alone* can strengthen for duty, reconcile the heart to God, and work their freedom from their foes. Therefore the Father has promised him, Christ has assured us that he will be given, and calls us to ask him.

4. That all, and especially dejected saints, should carefully consider the encouragement afforded in this text to prayer. Nothing is of greater importance to the Christian, than that his prayers be accepted, and

answered. He is often in the duty, and earnestly desires that he may not seek in vain. Often he does not see his prayers *immediately* answered, and Satan and unbelief suggest that they are rejected. This text affords strong consolation. Christ assures him that his prayers shall be heard. God is his father, and pities his children. The promises are sealed with the blood of his elder brother, who has redeemed the inheritance, and procured the earnest. The Holy Ghost himself produces in their hearts the desires which they feel, and will not disappoint them.

5. This subject affords the strongest arguments for resignation to the Lord's will in his providential dispensations. He encourages us to pray; he hears our cries; and gives us the Holy Spirit. If in any instance that which we seek be not granted, we may well conclude that it would not be good for us. If we are emptied from vessel to vessel, it is surely best. If the Father has given his Son *for us*, and his Spirit *to us*, will he not with *them* freely give us *all things*? Other things are of less value, and if they could promote his purpose of love, and our best interest, they would not be withheld. If dejected Christians could only believe these things, their "mourning would be turned into dancing, their sackcloth exchanged for gladness, and they would have joy unspeakable and full of glory."

6. That the proportion of love in this text which is so encouraging, and justly called on God's part "*How much more,*" loudly calls for a corresponding return on *our* part. The proportion should be *reciprocal*. If children show such love to their parents, and depend-

ance upon them, "*How much more*" should the hearts of believers be filled with love to their heavenly Father. We should not receive with *one* measure, and make our returns with *another*. Our confidence in our heavenly Father should be much more strong than that of children in their parents. We should open our hearts to, and disburden all our cares on, our heavenly Father. We should never ask these questions, "What shall we eat: what shall we drink: and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" God's children are the objects of his distinguishing care, and should trust his special promises.

It is to be lamented, however, that the greatest part of Gospel hearers, instead of endeavouring to make a suitable return, act as if "*how much more*" on God's part, warranted a "*how much LESS*" on theirs: so that the *more* God loves, the *less* he is loved.

Believers should apply with great importunity for the Holy Spirit. They should apply for him in all his different characters, and especially as a Spirit of grace and supplications. In proportion as they receive him, they will be holy and humble, prayerful and comfortable.

Some object, saying, "I have long sought the Holy Spirit, but I cannot think I have received him: if the Lord the Spirit were with me, all this would not have befallen me."

We would answer, Your long seeking, and your strong desire, are evidences in your favour. It is a good sign when persons see their need of the Spirit, and seek him; and are filled with sorrow when they apprehend that they have not received him. Many

enjoy the assistance of the Holy Spirit, who cannot be persuaded of it. The publican had a great measure of the Spirit, but could not believe it. His prayer, though short, had every evidence of being dictated by the Holy Ghost. It was scriptural, and the earnest desire of his heart; it proceeded from a deep sense of guilt and need, and was accompanied with great reverence; it was suited to his own condition, and mingled with some hope that the Lord would be merciful: in his application he was self-emptyed, had no confidence in the flesh, and sent up his prayer in the name of Christ, and sought mercy through the propitiation. Thus persons may have the Spirit without being sensible of it; and though any should have long asked, they should pray, and not faint. The Holy Ghost is a blessing well worth the waiting for.

Others object, "I once thought I had the Spirit; I could pray, and that duty was my delight; I longed for ordinances, and loved the habitation of the Lord's house; and thought I was refreshed, strengthened, and had communion with the head; now it is otherwise; my desires are faint, and my lips closed; ordinances are dry and tasteless, and the Lord seems to have taken away his Spirit from me."

Perhaps you have quenched the Spirit. Inspect your conduct. Lament after the Lord. Cry with much affection. Perhaps he has withdrawn in sovereignty. Wait on him. Light is sown for the righteous, and shall spring up. Full enjoyment is reserved for heaven. The day will break, and the shadows fly away.

Sinners, be persuaded to seek the Spirit. You greatly need him. Without him you can perform no duty acceptably. Without him you hasten on your everlasting ruin. You should apply to God as your Father. If ever you begin to call him your Father *in faith*, you cannot do it too soon. You are no worse than his children once were. Like you, they were of their father the devil. God in his mercy made them take thought about eternity. They cried, and he gave them the Spirit. While you have the same need, you have the same call. Improving it, you will have the same success. You have the same encouragement, for to you Christ says, "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Spirit to them that ask him."

SERMON V.

II CORINTHIANS V. 11.

Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.

PAUL was uncommonly diligent in his Master's service. He could say, without boasting, I laboured more abundantly than others. He was zealous in propagating the faith which he once destroyed. Much was forgiven him, and he loved much. He was constrained by love, and felt its power as a commanding principle. He was greatly impressed with the importance of death and eternity. The day of judgment was most momentous in his eye, and he always spake of it with peculiar emphasis. That he might find mercy of the Lord in that day, and be free of the blood of all men; that he might glorify Christ, and win souls to him, were powerful motives to diligence, made him patiently endure hardships, and count nothing dear in Christ's service.

When false apostles pretended to equal him either in doctrine, zeal, or holiness, he condescended on different instances of *his* sincerity and *their* hypocrisy. But if persons would not believe him, he told them there was a day coming which should declare, when the secrets of all hearts would be revealed. Im-

pressed with that day and his appearance before Christ, nothing could either terrify or allure him from the path of duty. Having asserted, in the preceding verse, that “we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad,” in the text he makes a proper improvement of that solemn subject. He endeavours to persuade men to fly from the wrath to come, by pointing out the terror of the Lord. The connexion between this and the foregoing verse is similar to another declaration in his former epistle—“Yea, wo is unto me if I preach not the gospel!” While future happiness is often set before sinners to prevail with them to come to Christ, in this and many other passages, the great danger of neglecting salvation is also urged as a powerful motive.

In order to explain this text we shall endeavour to open up the **TERROR** of the Lord;—the **KNOWLEDGE** which the apostle had of it;—and the **IMPROVEMENT** he made of it—*we persuade men*;—and then apply the whole.

I. We begin by opening up the **TERROR** of the Lord.

The first idea that occurs concerning the terror of the Lord, is the terror of mind which a guilty criminal in prison has when he thinks of and anticipates his trial and execution. How must his heart throb when he hears that the judge is arrived, and the witnesses summoned and ready: when his own conscience

accuses, and warns him that an ignominious death, at once depriving him of life and all its pleasures, will certainly be the issue! Could any point out to such a one a possibility of escape, with what avidity would he listen to every word! Paul knew this to be a faint emblem of the situation of the sinner favoured with the means of grace, and therefore endeavoured to persuade him. But there is a melancholy difference between the criminal to be tried at a human court, and the condemned sinner to whom Christ is offered. The poor sinner neither knows nor will believe his true condition. He is ignorant of the danger of that eternal ignominy and death to which he is exposed; and instead of prizing, despises the remedy. He is unacquainted with the true character of the Judge, who is omniscient, inexorable, and the offended party. There is another difference of great moment which deserves our attention: other judges ought to be equally steady and inflexible before the trial as in the time of it; but the great Judge of the Gospel hearer, till the very moment of the trial, is slow to anger, and beseeches sinners to be reconciled. He sends his servants to the streets and highways to compel sinners to come in. He invites and persuades till the eleventh hour. But, with all this tenderness and mercy, he certifies them that if they *now* refuse, and are found enemies at *that day*, they will eternally feel "the terror of the Lord," which they are now warned to avoid. What this terror is will appear still more evident from the following observations:

1. This terror is founded in, and flows from, the holy nature of the Judge. Some things depend upon

the will of God ; but to hate and punish sin is essential to his nature. Whatever some have said, God must surely punish a sinner continuing in sin so far as not to walk with him, and give him the light of his countenance. Two cannot walk together unless they are agreed. If life lies in the Lord's favour, to be eternally separated from the fountain of life is in itself a great punishment. If God could forgive sin without a satisfaction, how did he give his own Son to the death, and not spare him ? If God does not afflict men willingly, how could he have willingly afflicted Christ ? If there had been any other plan equally glorifying to the divine perfections, we may safely conclude that God would have adopted it. We are sure that the wages of sin is death ; that the Judge of all the earth will do right, and render to every man according to his works ; and that God will by no means clear the guilty.

Much is said in the Scriptures respecting God's holiness and justice. " He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." " Sin is that abominable thing which he hates ;" and " he is glorious in holiness." Divine holiness is that attribute by which God swears ; and it reflects a lustre on all his other perfections. In short, the primary and fundamental reason why sinners may and should fear, is because God is a holy and just God.

2. This terror is annexed to his law as a penalty. In the day thou eatest thereof, said Jehovah, thou shalt surely die. Whether penalties are essential to a law, we shall not expressly determine ; but the greatest number of human laws have them annexed.

In this, perhaps, more than in other things, human lawgivers have followed divine example. When God entered into covenant with Adam, he threatened death as the penal sanction. In this there was much mercy, as it fairly warned him. Besides, fear is a powerful principle in human nature. If it should be said that innocent Adam could not fear, or that that principle was inconsistent with his state of perfection: what, not be jealous of losing the good he had, or have an holy fear lest he should incur the punishment threatened! It is of the greatest importance here; and ought to be carefully observed, that the covenant was made with Adam, not for himself only, but for all his posterity: that it stands in all its unabated force to every one who is under it. The common phrase of the covenant of works being broken, only signifies that Adam broke the condition entitling to life, which by no means invalidates the curse or penalty annexed. God's sentence binding over to punishment, stands in full force against every sinner who is not interested in the covenant of grace. All who are not interested in the righteousness of the Surety are under the curse of the old broken covenant, and have contracted a debt of obedience in Adam their representing head, to which they are continually adding by transgressing the law as a rule of duty, and which they can never pay in their own persons; and therefore, if they continue in this state, the curse will fall upon them in all its weight. This seems evidently included in what the apostle wrote to the Romans, (Rom. iii. 19, 20,) "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 become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight : for by the law is the knowledge of sin." And also in what he wrote to the Galatians, (chap. iii. 10—12) " For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse : for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident : for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith : but the man that doeth them shall live in them."

3. The terror of the Lord is more fully explained and delineated in his word, and chiefly in the threatenings. It has been often said, that all the increasing light of the gospel is only an unfolding of the first promise. In it we have the Seed of the woman, and such a seed as could do more than Adam in innocence. With all his holiness and perfection, he could not resist the temptations of Satan, but fell before them : the Seed of the woman could bruise the head of that cunning adversary, after he had gained complete victory over our first parents, and restore the image of God after it was lost. The first promise was a revelation to our first parents of the covenant of grace, the expiating sacrifice which atoned for their sin, and the garment which alone could screen them from divine wrath. In like manner, the first threatening contained the punishment which will be inflicted on those who die under the curse ; and every succeeding threatening only opens up the contents of the first.

If it should be objected, that there are few stripes and many; and that it will be more tolerable for one place than another; we might answer, that the penalty of God's law is the *just* punishment; and if eating the forbidden tree deserved death, the penalty implied that every offence should get its due. We might also add that, while some sins, and especially those of Gospel hearers, are more heinous than others, the penalty includes punishment proportioned to the crime with all its aggravations. Awfully, therefore, must these suffer at last who have despised Christ, and rejected the counsel of God against their own souls.

There are many threatenings in God's word. Some express his indignation against sin in general, and others against particular transgressions. Of the first we have an example, Rom. vi. 23, "The wages of sin is death." The third commandment is an instance of the last, when God declares that he will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain. Of this last too we have a striking example, Deut. xxvii. 15—26. There we have in every verse a curse denounced against a particular sin specified in it. All the threatenings are expressly designed to open up *the terror of the Lord*. They ought to be carefully studied, and viewed as loud monitors of our danger. About them all it should never be forgotten, that God is under infinite obligation from his justice, holiness, and faithfulness, fully to execute them. If he is and must be true to his promises, he will be equally true to his threatenings. "He keepeth truth for ever."

4 The terror of the Lord is partly realized in his awful judgments inflicted on his enemies in this world. Some of these are recorded in his word, declaring at once what he has done, and warning what he would do in like cases. As the Lord is the same, the history of nations favoured with his word proves that his procedure is nearly the same in similar cases. The severest judgments, however, only *partly* realize the wrath and terror of the Lord. For many wise reasons God does not pour out all his wrath upon transgressors in this world, and some escape without any visible token of Divine vengeance. But, as Governor of the world, he sets up some as beacons; and reserves the rest for the day of retribution. As the way to heaven may be known by the footsteps of the flock, so God has here and there set up a person, guilty of this and that sin, as a monument of his wrath, as it were, with this motto inscribed on it, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men: Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." At a very early period a just and holy God began to set up these beacons; and he will continue to do it till the end of the world. "Thus God set a mark on Cain, and he wandered a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth." A whole world, eight persons excepted, were drowned in the flood. Sodom was destroyed by fire and brimstone from heaven. Pharaoh and his host were drowned in the Red Sea. The wilderness was strewed with the carcasses of unbelieving Israelites. On account of their sins, the land spewed

out the wicked Canaanites till they were utterly exterminated. Persisting in idolatry, and refusing to be reclaimed, the Jews were carried captive to Babylon, as an evidence of the Lord's anger on account of their sin. Long after, Jerusalem was sacked by the Romans, their city and temple were destroyed, and their nation cast off, because they had rejected the chief corner-stone. Though the spirit of the Gospel be mild, the Lord is always the same, and sin is always equally odious in his sight. The New Testament dispensation was introduced with some remarkable instances of divine vengeance on account of sin, which will be standing beacons to the end of time. Great love prevailed among the disciples of Christ, and they had all things in common. While the honest-hearted considered this as a precious opportunity of evidencing their love to Christ, and doing good to the household of faith, Ananias and Sapphira improved it as a fair opportunity of getting a name to live. Having sold their possession, they kept back part of the price; but asserted they gave the whole. Filled with the Holy Ghost, Peter discovered their wretched conduct, and made them a public example. Having proved, to the conviction of all around, that they lied to the Holy Ghost, and detected their hypocrisy, he reprobated their conduct, and pronounced their doom, and they fell down and gave up the ghost. Herod too, employing his power to persecute the Church, was suddenly cut off in the height of his prosperity. On a certain occasion, the multitude shouted, it is the voice of a god, not of a man. This impious adulation, when

adopted by one who professed the knowledge of the true God, brought him to an awful end. He was made a sudden and striking example of divine displeasure. The avenging angel of the Lord smote him with an irresistible, though invisible, stroke—he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. These judgments are truly awful, and a part of the terror of the Lord; but, alas, they are only the small beginnings of the sorrow of sinners!

5. The terror of the Lord will be fully inflicted in the other world. *Then* only does the sinner get his due. *That* period the apostle has chiefly in his eye. *Here* every sinner has a multitude of mercies. *There* he has none. *Then* only does the wrath of the Lamb begin to burn. *Now* is the accepted time, and the period of God's patience.

To describe the terror of the Lord after death exceeds the wisdom and eloquence of angels. God has said much concerning it in his word. We ought to search the Scriptures, that we may be furnished with such knowledge of future wrath as will warn us to fly from it.

The terror of the Lord in the other world may be divided into different parts, to enable us to form some suitable conceptions of it.

There is the terror of the *tribunal* and *judgment*. The great Judge and every offender must meet. The trump will sound, the call will be given, Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment; and willing or unwilling they must all obey! No wonder that guilty sinners shriek, and “try to hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and cry to the mountains

and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand!" The Judge comes in his glory; and every sinner must appear before him, and give an account of his every deed, word, and thought, where not one was good! Awful beyond expression must his situation be! In the entrance of the solemn scene, the splendour of the Judge will overwhelm him, and an awakened conscience will anticipate the sentence! Besides, multitudes of God's enemies have already been long in the place of punishment, and come out of it (if they come out, or rather do not bring it along with them) not to abate their pain; for they would prefer the hottest place in hell to a sight of the Judge on his tribunal, and a reckoning with him! The Judge is seated—the books are opened—the criminal is summoned—and all that he has done is brought under careful review, and judged with strict justice and the greatest impartiality! Well may we ask, "Where then shall the wicked and ungodly appear?" May not the Judge be deceived? In such a vast crowd of important business, may not some things escape his notice? Amidst the amazing multitude, which no finite power can number, may not some individual pass unnoticed? The omniscience of the Judge renders these things impossible, and scarcely leaves room for supposition itself. Might not then a single person or two creep over to his right hand! Indeed they dare not! A single glance of his eye would strike terror to their hearts!

Shall all be there that day! Yes, all who ever were, are, or shall be—all, from the highest to the lowest. The haughty monarch, who in this world was screened by the pitiful maxim, “The king can do no evil, and is not accountable,” will find such language of no avail at that tribunal! There he must account for the lives and property of those over whom he reigned, and thousands slain at his instance will stand as ready proof against him, cursing the day when, to gratify his ambition, they sported with death, and were hurried to the dread tribunal—

“Cut off even in the blossom of their sin,
No reck’ning made, but sent to their account
With all their imperfections on their head.”

Then every motive for beginning and continuing the scourge of war will be weighed in an equal and unerring balance. Then he will find, what he might have known before, that “Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared.” The crafty statesman and politician, too, must be there, and all his measures shall be measured again by a rule which seldom occurred to him! The oppressor too, and the oppressed, shall be there! A vast concourse! The beggar and the Gospel hearer, and you and I, must be there! Every eye shall see him, and all his enemies shall have ample justice!

There is the terror of the *sentence*. The judgment being finished, sentence will be pronounced against all his enemies—a sentence replete with terror: “Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, pre-

pared for the devil and his angels." Here every word is emphatic, important, and decisive; and will be pronounced with infinite majesty, and with an holy indignation which will pierce every heart. This sentence is just, final, and irreversible; and will be pronounced with an authority which neither can be disputed, nor disobeyed. From this sentence there can be no appeal. Every mouth shall be stopped. His enemies shall go away into everlasting punishment. Thus,

There will also be the terror of the *execution*. The sentence will be executed without the least delay. The enemies of the Judge, without exception, shall be turned into hell. The sufferings of the damned there, joining the severity and duration together, is the *precise* amount of the terror of the Lord; but who can tell or reckon up *that* amount! We can only have very faint conceptions of devouring flames and everlasting burnings.

All the miseries of this life bear no proportion, and scarcely have the least semblance to the torments of hell. The godly have the greatest share of trials here: but they are all mixed with mercy. Hell is pure, unmixed wrath. Sinners who suffer most in this world, are only sprinkled with a few drops of Divine wrath; but in hell the waves roll over them. *Here* they only take, as it were, a small sip of the cup of wrath; *there* they drink the bitter dregs. To assist us in our conceptions of Divine wrath, we should carefully consider how terrible it was to Christ. Falling upon him, it made him sweat great drops of

blood, and cry out in extreme agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" If it was so in the green tree, what will it be in fuel dried, and already attracting the flames of wrath!

Attempting to describe the terror of the Lord as inflicted in the other world, the heart fails, and the mind sinks under the awful and arduous task! One thing is certain, these torments never abate, nor come to an end; and the longest use and habit never make them in the least degree more tolerable. Awful eternity! But the mind recoils.—May a gracious God grant that we may never go to the place of punishment, where these terrors are felt, and known in their utmost extent!!!

6. In explaining this terror it is of the last importance to observe, that it is the terror *of the Lord*. His wrath is infinitely superior to the wrath of all the creatures. However terrible it may be to be wholly given over to Satan, that tormentor, it can never be compared with "falling into the hands of the living God," justly incensed and taking vengeance. He can torment his enemies more, in a short space, than *all* the creatures could do to eternity; and he takes the punishment of his enemies into his *own* hands. Every Divine perfection makes the future punishment of sinners awfully great. Through partiality, creature punishment is often improper. God is just, and exactly proportions the punishment to the crime. Impotent creatures often are unable to inflict the punishment which they meditate and design. Their malice is superior to their power. An omnipotent God is able

to inflict that which he knows to be just. Among the creatures, one punishment is often exchanged for another. God is of one mind. He is immutable and inexorable; and the sinner shall never again see his face in mercy.

But something still more awful is implied, when it is called the terror of the Lord. It is the terror of the *Lord Jesus Christ*, as is evident from the foregoing verse. The apostle asserts, that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and immediately adds, knowing therefore the terror of the Lord. It is the terror of HIM who, though equal with God, took our nature upon him, and laid down his life for sinners. It is the terror of him who *could* have saved the chief of sinners—of him who *would* have saved them—who often *invited* them, and *complained* when they would not comply—who gave the most gracious assurance that whosoever would, might come, and that whoever came would not be cast off. It is the terror of the *Lamb* who offered himself a sacrifice, to satisfy Divine justice, in the room of sinners. It is the terror of him who appointed the means of grace for gathering sinners to himself, and promises to accompany them with his Spirit and gracious presence to make them effectual; and whose Spirit every impenitent Gospel hearer in some measure quenches.

When we consider what the Lord Jesus hath done for Gospel hearers, the precious opportunities they have enjoyed; and how awfully they have neglected and despised them; it is no wonder that *his* wrath should be most awful and terrible when it begins to

burn. With infinite propriety may he address them at the last day, as in Prov. i. 24—28, “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation; and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.”—There is scarcely any term which more emphatically points out the awful nature of the terror of the Lord than when he is said to LAUGH at the sinner’s calamity. It expresses an holy but awful complacency in pouring out his wrath upon such as rejected his counsel, and preferred their lusts to his grace and salvation. In this world he wept over Jerusalem; in the other he *laughs* at all his foes. It will be an essential part of their punishment to be judged, condemned, and consigned to everlasting torment, by HIM who did so much for sinners, who strove so much with themselves; and whom they treated with such contempt.

Leaving the other branches of this subject we shall conclude with some inferences.

1. We infer that CHRIST holds an important and distinguished place in the Christian religion. *He is the great and final Judge.* Before him we must all appear. To qualify him for such important work, omniscience and almighty power are absolutely neces-

sary. He is Lord of all. *He is the believer's sole comfort.* Take Christ out of the Scriptures, or keep him out of view; the Christian would see no ground at all for consolation. *He is the sinner's terror.* Most terrible will he be to him at last, when he "shall be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that obey not his Gospel." With authority he will bestow a kingdom on his own people, and consign his enemies to everlasting destruction. He is the glorious Saviour who now calls sinners to him, and he will be the glorious Judge who shall at last dismiss them. He performs every promise, and executes every threatening. His comforting presence is the happiness of heaven, and his tormenting power the essence of hell.

2. That as sinners have now every encouragement to come to Christ, if they still refuse, they can have no reason to complain when cast into outer darkness. *Now they have every encouragement.* When in this world he called and invited them. He still speaks from heaven, and intreats them not to refuse. He appoints ordinances, which are as accessible as the streets or lanes of a city. He sends forth and qualifies his servants. He expressly enjoins them to "compel sinners to come in." He makes the worst welcome. To gain their hearts, he is at great pains, and gives them line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. He warns them of their danger if they refuse. *If they perish how can they complain!* Christ may well complain and say, long I stood and knocked at the door of your hearts, but you would not open:

ye hardened your hearts, and quenched my Spirit: what could I have done more, but ye set at nought my counsel. Instead of complaining, may not the sinner say, what could I have done more to ruin myself, and reject the counsel of God! I have spoken and done evil as I could. When cast into outer darkness every mouth shall be stopped before God.

3. The great duty of gospel ministers. They should endeavour to persuade sinners to fly from the wrath to come, and escape the terror of the Lord. The apostle kept this always in his eye. Affected with the situation of thoughtless sinners, wantonly sporting on the brink of eternal destruction, he laboured to awaken, alarm, and arouse them. He endeavoured to bring hell to them, and present it to their view, that they might never go to it. Every minister of Jesus Christ ought to do the same. Neglecting this, or doing it in a careless manner, the ambassadors of Christ are neither faithful to their great Master, to perishing sinners, nor their own souls. No where is loitering more criminal and inexcusable than in the sacred function. If the servants of Christ have tasted that the Lord is gracious, a sense of what he has done for their own souls should make them steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Believing they should speak. No thought can be more comforting than that some perishing souls, by their means, have been plucked as brands from the burning. Nothing can be more galling than that some have perished for

lack of knowledge, through their negligence. Much lies at the watchman's door. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he comes shall find so doing.

4. That the law should be preached as well as the Gospel, and in subserviency to it. None ever knew better than the apostle the unsearchable riches of Christ; or the propriety and efficacy of them, as an evangelical motive to prevail with sinners to believe. Never was any at more pains in opening up the blessings of the New Covenant, the perfect righteousness of the Redeemer, and the fulness of grace lodged in his person; the immediate right, and free access which every sinner has to them all in the Gospel; and none ever urged them more powerfully as motives to believe. But he did not forget to preach the law. He opened up its spirituality and extent. He exhibited it as a glass in which sinners might see their sin and guilt. He opened up the penalty, and set the terror of the Lord before men. He pointed out the remedy, and made use of the law as a schoolmaster to drive them to it. The same method should still be adopted. Ministers should try to break the heart by the law, that the sinner may apply to Gospel grace for the cure.

5. How hardening and infatuating must sin be! Though the happiness of heaven be set before the sinner to encourage him; though the torments of hell be opened up to terrify him; though the law be opened up to detect his crimes and the fallacy of all his excuses; though salvation by free grace be offered to him in the Gospel to allure him; and

though all these things be done frequently, fervently, feelingly, faithfully, and though the charmer should charm ever so wisely, still he sins! Can any thing break the power of sin! Nothing but that Grace which is invincible indeed!

SERMON VI.

II CORINTHIANS V. 11.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.

THE wrath of God is a familiar theme to an awakened soul. These who believe the reality of future wrath, and have not obtained solid assurance of being delivered from the curse, are much at the throne of grace supplicating mercy. These who have good hope of being justified and delivered, are filled with gratitude, and praise the Lord. They commiserate these who are under the curse, and unacquainted with their true situation, and will not believe it. Affected with their sad condition, according to their stations and opportunities, the converted use every mean to awaken and persuade them.

In the conduct and misery of unbelieving and careless sinners, Paul saw a just picture of his own condition before the Lord met with him. In his present situation and happiness he experimentally knew what they might be if they would believe, and he ardently wished them altogether such as he was, except his bonds. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, which he had mercifully escaped, and the

sweetness and efficacy of divine grace, which he now enjoyed—he *persuaded men*.

Having endeavoured to open up the terror of the Lord, we now proceed to the

II. Head, which was to speak of the apostle's knowledge of this terror, which influenced him to persuade men.

The apostle was far from having a *perfect* knowledge of divine wrath. As it never entered into the heart of man to conceive the blessedness of the Lord's people; the misery of his enemies, thrust into the bottomless pit, and the lake that burneth, is equally inconceivable. Unless we perfectly knew the debt contracted by the sinner, and the unabating claim of the divine law—unless we knew the demerit of sin, and the power and justice of God rendering to the sinner according to his work—we can never perfectly know the greatness of his punishment, or the vast contents of the terror of the Lord. We can neither conceive the punishment of *sense*, or *loss*; the blessedness of which they are deprived, or the misery under which they lie to eternity.

The apostle had a *certain* knowledge of the terror of the Lord. Though unacquainted with the greatness of divine wrath, he knew the reality of it. He learned from the Scriptures, and believed that God had appointed a day in which he would judge the world by Jesus Christ, and that all his enemies would be turned into hell. In his epistles, he de-

scribes future wrath in a very affecting manner. Writing to the Thessalonians, he expresses himself thus: "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." In his epistle to the Hebrews, he describes the punishment of Gospel hearers in language which fully proves how firmly he believed, and how much he was affected with it. He calls it a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries: a falling into the hands of the living God that he may take vengeance, which he affirms to be fearful beyond expression. Without condescending on other instances, all his epistles are a standing and conclusive proof that he knew the terror of the Lord, and that the despisers of Christ treasured up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath.

After it pleased the Lord to reveal his Son in his heart, Paul was greatly affected with the evil of sin, especially unbelief and rejecting Christ. This tended to acquaint him with the punishment it deserved. The word assured him that there behoved to be a proportion between that enmity which rejected such a loving Saviour, and divine resentment when the day of grace was over. Never any had more exalted and affectionate views of salvation by free grace, or made greater exertions to ascertain an interest in it, and bring others to seek and improve

it. This partly proceeded from a certain persuasion of the infinite and unspeakable misery, which is the inevitable consequence of falling short of it.

The apostle knew the terror of the Lord, and the weight of the curse, from the astonishing method by which he, or any other sinner, could be delivered from it. None but a divine person could bear the load of wrath. The holy human nature of Christ was so affected as to make him say, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Without shedding of blood, there was no remission, and it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. The blood of Christ alone cleanseth from sin. If pardon, and the other blessings of salvation, cost Christ so dear a price; and if divine wrath was so awful when poured out upon *him*, the apostle would well see what *sinner*s had to suffer.

Recollecting what he was formerly, when he blasphemed the Lord and wasted his church, he always considered himself as a miracle of mercy, and never forgot that he was the chief of sinners. Impressed with the unspeakable love of Christ in delivering his soul from the lowest hell, and affected with a sense of the wrath he deserved, he greatly pitied all who were in a similar situation.

III. The next thing in our method was to illustrate the improvement Paul made of his knowing the terror of the Lord—" *we persuade men.*" This phrase, in its connexion, implies,

1. That there is great force of argument from the terror of the Lord, and a knowledge of it, to use all

possible means to escape. This is the amount of Paul's declaration. It is God's end in revealing his wrath in his word, and opening it up in his ordinances, that men may be warned to fly from it. It is the end which the Holy Spirit has in his eye in convincing men of their misery. His convictions are always attended with some motions on the heart, urging the person to avoid it. These are called striving, and such as do not comply are said to resist them. Thus Stephen in pointed language addressed the Jews, Acts vii. 51, "Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." The Holy Spirit is always in the church, convincing of sin and the certain danger to which it exposes; and they who do not believe, in the language of Isaiah, rebel and vex God's Holy Spirit, and harden their own hearts. Judgments and threatenings, as already mentioned, are beacons and monitors; and the Gospel warns every man: and who but the veriest fool would rush upon dangers of which he is duly apprized. That men may use all possible diligence to escape the terror of the Lord, it is not only revealed, but the dreadful nature of it is pointed out by many expressive figures, all calculated to show that it is a fearful thing to die in sin, and fall into the hands of the living God.

When a discovery is made to any person that he is in great danger, that in itself is a full, clear, and forcible argument to endeavour if possible to avoid it; and the greater the danger, the force of the argument is the greater. If the wrath of an earthly power

should make us use all lawful means to escape temporal punishment, much more should the terror of the Lord influence our hearts and awaken our endeavours to fly from it. In this manner Christ argued, Luke xii. 4, 5, "And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." If we would avoid future wrath, we should try to avoid sin, the procuring cause. This can only be done by improving the righteousness of Christ for taking away the guilt, and the Spirit of Christ for breaking the power of sin, and promoting holiness.

2. That there is a way to escape the terror of the Lord which he himself approves. Had there been no way of escaping future punishment approved by Christ, to have persuaded men to fly from it, would only have been an attempt to take his enemies out of his hand, and rescue them from deserved wrath. Had this been possible, it would have been unjust. It is diametrically opposite to that love which Paul had to the Redeemer. Such an attempt would have joining league with his enemies, bidding defiance to his power, and would have argued unspeakable contempt of his law and Gospel—his authority and grace; but Paul had not so learned Christ.

The apostle persuaded men to fly from divine wrath in virtue of a special commission from Jesus of Nazareth, who appeared to him in his way to Damascus. The Lord said to Ananias, Arise, go and

inquire for one called Saul of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth. Ananias objected, expressed his unwillingness, and justified his conduct by Saul's cruelty and persecution, and the authority he had from the chief priests to persecute the saints in that city. "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel."

Persuading men consisted in opening up the plan of grace, a method not only approved of God, but the chief of his ways. Explaining and urging the terror of the Lord, without unfolding the method of grace, would be no better than tormenting sinners before the time. In opposition to this the apostle opened up to sinners the covenant of grace with its fulness, and set before them the exceeding great and precious promises. He pointed out an all-atoning and expiating sacrifice, and a perfect righteousness already wrought out, with which God is well pleased. He explained and urged the immediate access which every Gospel hearer had to all the blessings of the everlasting covenant. He proved that it was the greatest duty, as well as highest privilege, to improve that method of salvation. He endeavoured to convince sinners, that a believing improvement of Christ would be more honouring and glorifying to God than their sins had been dishonouring. To understand how he persuaded men to escape the terror of the Lord by proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation, we should carefully read his epistles. The whole of them almost fully prove what we have now said. We shall only mention his emphatic language.

Rom. iii. 20, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them who believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ," &c. We have a beautiful example of persuading sinners by unfolding the riches of grace, in the two last verses of the chapter where the text lies; "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." You may also consult 1 Cor. i. 30, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

3. Persuading men includes great pains and assiduity. The man who aims at persuading is not satisfied with a simple declaration of his message, but gives line upon line. Far from thinking it enough to mention it once, he repeats it again and again, and places it in every point of light. Cold formal declaration is far from suiting his purpose, and he uses all the alluring arts of persuasion. He tries all the avenues to the heart, and adopts every possible method to gain his end. Such were the pains and assiduity of the apostle, that, careless about every other object,

he was "instant in season and out of season." Redemption by free grace, through the Redeemer's righteousness, was his favourite and leading theme. On that subject he dwelt with peculiar delight, opened it up with the greatest care, and adduced numberless arguments to persuade sinners to believe and improve it. He spent much time and pains in unfolding and explaining the doctrines of grace, of which we have an admirable proof in the first part of his epistle to the Romans. He followed the same method in writing to the Hebrews, and proved that Christ was the substance of all the types and ceremonies, with which they were already acquainted. Not satisfied in proposing strong and conclusive reasoning to the understanding, he was at great pains to incline the will, and work upon the affections. We have a striking instance of his manner when he reasoned with Felix of righteousness, temperance, and judgment* to come. So powerful, pertinent, and affecting were his arguments, such an impression did they make on the understanding and affections, that, unable wholly to resist the force of truth, Felix trembled, and dismissed the apostle. His manner is also exemplified in the masterly and persuasive address made to Agrippa, which constrained the king to cry out, in presence of the chief captains and principal men of the city, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

The various ways in which he addressed persons of different characters, were a signal proof of his unremitting care and anxious desire to gain his end. With the Jews he reasoned from their own Scriptures.

With the Athenians he argued from their inscription to the unknown God, and declared unto them Jesus and the resurrection. To impress the Cretians with their true character, and need of a Saviour, he quoted their own poets. His pains and assiduity appeared in a very conspicuous light in constantly keeping in his eye his great end of persuading men to avoid the terror of the Lord, and flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel. The most trying situation in which he was placed never made him desist. In the stocks he praised the Lord, and declared the way of salvation to the poor jailor, and rescued him from rushing into hell, with the atrocious guilt of self-murder added to his other crimes. Carried a prisoner to Cesarea, he ceased not to preach Christ. At sea, in an awful storm of long continuance, in presence of the whole company in the vessel, he gave thanks to God, in such a manner as was calculated to impress them with the highest veneration for that God whom he served, *as alone* able to change the storm into a calm. We cannot doubt but, during the voyage, he would often speak *of* Christ, as well as *to* him. He would preach as well as pray. Cast on the island of Melita, among a barbarous people, he prayed with, and cured the father of the chief man of the island, and many others. During the three months he was detained, he would not fail to unfold the doctrine of Christ, and put an evident mark of distinction on his day. “ In his own hired house, at Rome, for two whole years, he received all that came unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern

the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him." In short, such were his pains and assiduity, that what was said of his great Master was applicable, in a great measure, to himself, *that he went about doing good*. Wherever he was, in the house, or by the way, among friends or enemies, he embraced every opportunity of preaching the cross of Christ, and always took that method which was best adapted to attract attention, and impress the heart.

4. It includes fervency and zeal. The apostle's fervency was equal to his assiduity. Like one who had a great and favourite object in his eye, he never forgot it, and was never satisfied without it. He was fervent in spirit. In every place, as well as at Athens, "his spirit was stirred in him." Reflecting how much he was indebted to the Redeemer, and how willing Christ was to receive sinners; with the utmost fervency he recommended him as the only Saviour. Interested in him himself, and inflamed with love to him, he deeply felt for those who were in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, and travailed in birth; zealous that Christ should be formed in them.

There cannot be a better proof of his fervency and zeal, than the severe *sufferings* and hardships he underwent in his Master's service. His *labours* too were uncommon, and directed to no other end than the glory of Christ, and the good of souls. He exerted himself to the utmost in preaching the faith he formerly destroyed. Zealous and fervent in the good cause, nothing could dishearten or weary, allure or terrify him from his duty. We have a short but surprising account of his labours, Rom. xv. 19, "From

Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, he fully preached the Gospel of Christ." His history gives us a detail of his severe sufferings in this long circuit, the amount of which is, that bonds and imprisonment awaited him in every city.

His zeal prompted him to adopt the most probable methods of winning souls to Christ. Hear his own account, 1 Cor. ix. 19—23, "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews: to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law: to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some: and this I do for the Gospel's sake." Never did the Christian temper appear to greater advantage than in the apostle. His fervency and zeal rendered him indefatigable in the work of the Gospel. He counted nothing dear so that he might finish his course with joy. Not to say more, he was an unparalleled example of the injunction he gave to Timothy, "But be thou in these things."

5. The apostle's language "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men," implies that there is no likelihood of gaining the hearts of sinners to Christ, unless some impressions are made by the terror of the Lord. The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. If conscience does

not feel the weight of guilt, and tremble at the consequence, the heart will never seek relief. While we think that we are rich and increased in goods, and standing in need of nothing, we will never make application for supply. In vain is the Saviour preached, unless persons know and feel themselves to be sinners. Salvation always begins in a sense of sin, and sin is never properly understood, but as offending the highest Lord, and entailing great and certain misery. True, the Gospel is good news, and Christ is freely offered unto all; but he is always exhibited as a Saviour from sin, and the good news always suppose and only suit the greatest misery and want. Christ never will be apprehended, unless the person is deeply sensible that he cannot do without him. Agreeably to this we are taught in a well known form of sound words, that "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the Gospel." Here, if conviction of sin is not spoken of as previous to the enlightened soul's reception of Christ in the Gospel, it is expressly mentioned as always accompanying, and necessary to, if not included in that faith which appropriates him. In the Scriptures it will be found, that only such as felt and feared their misery, applied for salvation. The jailor trembled and believed. The publican, weighed down with a sense of sin, cried for mercy. Most emphatic is the apostle's account of

his own history at conversion, Rom. vii. 9, "For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Without the sentence of death in ourselves, we will never apply to the Saviour. Unless we feel ourselves bond-slaves, we will never desire redemption; and till we are sensible of our starving condition, we will never think of returning to our Father's house. Whether we consider conviction prior to, or contemporary with faith, it is absolutely necessary; and in its nature includes not only a sense of sin, but a certain persuasion that misery will infallibly accompany it, unless we are delivered.

6. It also includes that he insisted much upon a present compliance. When men are persuaded, the end is gained; and Paul never attempted to persuade, but he desired, if possible, to gain the point before he concluded. An advocate at the bar, when a critical and momentous cause is in dependance, makes the utmost exertions to persuade while he pleads, and gain a present decision in favour of his client. If possible, his urgency is increased if the life of a near relation is at stake, if he is absolutely certain that the cause is good, and that only false charges, and not legal bars, stand in the way. In Christ's behalf, the apostle plead that sinners might be saved. Their everlasting life was at stake. Many just charges lay against them, especially from the law of God. These were all answered in the blood of Christ, and every legal bar between them and their complete redemption was removed. Nothing was wanting but

their consent. This the apostle laboured to gain, and prayed them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. To prevail with them, he pointed out that even their consent was secured by the divine promise.

When a physician, or a friend by his direction, persuades a person, apparently at the point of death, to make the only experiment which is likely to preserve his life by taking some powerful medicine, he labours now to prevail, and persuade the patient without delay. Paul was in a situation exactly similar. Sinners, whom he endeavoured to persuade, were every moment exposed to eternal death, and therefore he urged a present compliance. While this is in the nature of persuading, many considerations stimulated the apostle to press sinners immediately to comply, and guard against procrastination. These convenient seasons, so congenial to the sinful heart, were not to be depended on, and he might never again see those whom he then addressed; and though he should, their hearts, if not *now* softened, would be harder, and more steeled against every impression. If they were now gained to Christ, while they would be the apostle's joy and crown in the other world, in this they would immediately commence workers together with him, and cordially join in endeavouring to persuade others. Besides, the sooner any are persuaded to come to Christ, their period of sinning is shorter, and their guilt less aggravated. He did not know how soon they might be cast into that place from which there is no redemption, and the terror of the Lord be fully inflicted. Every thing loudly called him to use every art to win souls to Christ without

delay. While it was Christ's leading injunction, seek first the kingdom of God; it was the apostle's constant caution, receive not the grace of God in vain, for now is the accepted time, and day of salvation.

7. In persuading men, the apostle earnestly urged them to use all possible means to persuade themselves. In vain do we speak to others about matters of everlasting concern, unless we can prevail with them to *think*. Recollecting how much he himself was deceived, and certain that others were equally deluded by the deceitful heart, the apostle was truly in earnest to detect their mistake, and open their eyes. Before conversion, sinners are totally unacquainted with their own hearts, and when brought to consideration, then only do they either come to themselves, or to Christ. The means recommended by the apostle were, a diligent study of God's law in its spirituality and extent, serious meditation on the holiness of God, a careful perusal of the written word, great concern about eternity, frequent self-examination, and much fervent prayer.

8. The apostle concluded all his aims at persuading sinners, by assuring them in the most plain and unequivocal terms, that if the fear of the terror of the Lord, in conjunction with other motives, did not prevail timeously to persuade them, they should certainly *feel* divine wrath, when persuasion would be too late, and wholly in vain. It was this which made him use such urgency with sinners not to receive the grace of God in vain. This, also, made him warn them that if they received it in vain, they would know the great

salvation they had neglected, by the great wrath which would be inflicted.

In fine, he seconded all his endeavours with fervent prayer to God, that HE, by his Spirit, would *effectually persuade men*. Paul was no Arminian. He well knew that the best arguments, urged by the most powerful motives, would never, without the efficacy of Divine grace, persuade or change a single heart. While this was clearly asserted in many places of Scripture, the apostle had two proofs that the most conclusive reasoning would never change the heart: he knew what it took to change his own: every mean was in vain, till he got a remarkable discovery of Christ, and a particular intimation of peace and pardon.—Often did he himself make every exertion to persuade others, and some continued hardened, while others blasphemed.

No man ever spake more about the necessity of the exceeding greatness of the mighty power of God to persuade a sinner, and shut him up to the faith. He spake invariably of the conversion of sinners, in terms which implied the absolute necessity of Divine power and energy. One while, he asserts that sinners in their natural state are dead, and that Christ alone, by his Spirit, could quicken them. Again, he calls their conversion a new creation, and a first resurrection.

These considerations would influence his gracious heart to apply to God in the most fervent manner for that Divine energy, and these gracious influences which alone could make the means effectual, and

powerfully persuade sinners to come to Christ, and escape the terror of the Lord.

All these things he would do, firmly persuaded that they were means of God's appointment, which he had promised to bless. This would make him speak with authority and courage, and animate his heart with hopes of success. He knew that the Lord would gather his own to himself, and that he would bless these means for that end. He knew the grace and faithfulness of him who had promised to go forth working, when his servants went forth preaching. He relied on Christ's faithful promise that he would be with him always to the end. Constrained by love, and animated by Divine faithfulness, however great his discouragements were, having received this ministry, he did not faint, but knowing the terror of the Lord, continued to persuade men.

We shall now subjoin some further application.

1. We may learn from this subject that moral suasion of itself will never change the heart, or bring a sinner to Christ. The Scriptures expressly assert this. They assure us that no man cometh unto Christ unless the Father draw him. We have many proofs in fact. Christ was infinitely able to argue. He was well acquainted with all the arts of persuasion; but "no man received his testimony." Paul had every possible advantage. He had excellent natural abilities, much literature, and great grace. He received his acquired endowments at the feet of Gamaliel, and made such progress, as made some conclude that much learning had made him mad. He received his

gracious qualifications in the third heavens. But, with all these attainments, he could never persuade or change a single heart. Not accompanied by Divine power, his best discourses adapted in every respect to his hearers, instead of bringing sinners to Christ, exposed him to the contemptuous titles of a babbler, a setter forth of strange gods, and an insignificant creature, rude in speech.

Moral suasion never did, and never will, produce love to Christ in the carnal heart, which is enmity. The utmost which the best reasoning can do in this matter, is to produce a cold, dry, uninfluencing light in the head, and some transient, uneasy emotions in the conscience; while the heart itself is left hard as the nether millstone. Sin is too strong for the best arguments. The hearts of men are fully set in them to do evil. The heart is dead, dark, shut, and makes positive exertions to keep out the light. The old man fights hard for his own safety, and the enjoyment of his lusts. If he appears at any time to yield, it is only a kind of ill-formed resolution, and insincere promise to repent at some future period, and convenient season. The resolutions and engagements of the unrenewed heart are like those of one half awake. He promises to rise, but instead of performing, instantly falls faster asleep.

2. That it is of the greatest importance for Gospel hearers to know whether they are persuaded or not. All who are persuaded *believe the terror of the Lord to be a great reality*, that they themselves deserve Divine wrath, and are exposed to it. They believe that they must fall under that wrath, unless they are mercifully

delivered. This produces *great concern*. It makes them cry, with the jailer, What shall I do to be saved; or with these in Micah, Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow before the most high God! This leads to *fervent prayer*. Impressions of future wrath, not issuing in fervent supplication, have no evidence of being saving. If these prayers for mercy are in earnest, the suppliant gives up with all self-dependance, and *ventures on Christ*. Discerning the naughtiness of his own righteousness, he casts it away as filthy rags, and depends alone on the finished work of the Redeemer.

When men are not persuaded, though there should be great awakenings, powerful convictions, and apparent reformation; these effects will only be *temporary and transient*. It will "happen unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and, the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." Their hearts will be more hardened than ever.

They who have been persuaded should be thankful. Christ has done much *for* them: he bare the wrath of God, and died in their stead. He has done much *in* them: he has *actually* persuaded them, changed their hearts, and made them willing in a day of power. He will do *much more*: he will lead them in all their way, and keep them. He will more and more persuade them to improve his fulness. He will do great things beyond conception for them to all eternity. They should therefore, like David, summon their souls, and all that is within them to praise; and bless his holy name. Psal. ciii. 1—6.

Sinners should now be persuaded. O for the persuasive arts of the apostle, that if possible we might gain some! Sinners should think on the shortness of time, the vanity of all sublunary enjoyments, and the endless duration of eternity. They should remember and believe, that there are only two places and conditions in the other world—the dungeons of darkness, and the mansions of glory. They should believe that they themselves must be in one or the other of them; that they deserve hell; and that, without an interest in Christ, they can never enter heaven. Hell is misery beyond conception. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we would persuade sinners; and they should be persuaded. But, as we are *unable*, and they *unwilling*, may JEHOVAH the *Spirit* persuade them!

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The first part of the book is devoted to a general history of the world, from the beginning of time to the present day. The author discusses the various ages of the world, the different nations, and the progress of civilization. He also touches upon the various religions and philosophies that have shaped human thought.

The second part of the book is a detailed account of the history of the British Empire. It begins with the reign of King Henry II and continues through the reigns of King Richard I, King John, King Henry III, King Edward I, King Edward II, King Richard II, King Henry IV, King Henry V, King Henry VI, King Edward IV, King Richard III, King Henry VII, King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, King Mary I, King Elizabeth I, King James I, King Charles I, King Charles II, King James II, King George I, King George II, King George III, and King George IV.

The third part of the book is a history of the American colonies, from their first settlement in 1607 to the Declaration of Independence in 1776. The author discusses the various struggles and conflicts that led to the birth of a new nation.

The fourth part of the book is a history of the French Revolution, from its beginning in 1789 to the execution of King Louis XVI in 1793. The author discusses the various phases of the revolution, the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte, and the fall of the revolution.

The fifth part of the book is a history of the Napoleonic Wars, from the beginning of the wars in 1803 to the final defeat of Napoleon in 1815. The author discusses the various battles and campaigns, the rise of Napoleon as Emperor, and the eventual collapse of his empire.

The sixth part of the book is a history of the Congress of Vienna, from its beginning in 1814 to its conclusion in 1815. The author discusses the various negotiations and agreements that were made, and the resulting balance of power in Europe.

The seventh part of the book is a history of the 19th century, from the beginning of the century to the present day. The author discusses the various events and movements that shaped the century, including the Industrial Revolution, the Revolutions of 1848, and the rise of nationalism.

The eighth part of the book is a history of the 20th century, from the beginning of the century to the present day. The author discusses the various events and movements that shaped the century, including the two world wars, the Cold War, and the rise of the civil rights movement.

SERMON VII.

ISAIAH L. 4.

*The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned,
that I should know how to speak a word in season to him
that is weary.*

READING this comforting declaration, one cannot but ask, of whom speaketh the prophet, of himself, or of some other? Perhaps Isaiah might have some respect to the difficulties in his own work, and the encouragement he had to go on in it. A greater than Isaiah is here. In some preceding chapters the deliverance from the Babylonish captivity is celebrated in most lofty strains. Lest, after the accomplishment, it should be thought that this deliverance appeared much greater, and more glorious in prophecy than in fact, when the Jews returned from Babylon in a poor condition; the prophet in chap. xxix. shows, that the prophecy ultimately respected another redemption, which would as far surpass these expressions, as the Babylonish deliverance might seem to come short of them. The prophet has in his eye the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, who is spoken of in the most elevated strains as God's servant, infinitely higher than Cyrus.

In this chapter God shows that those who were under calamities had themselves to blame. He neither divorced them as their husband, nor sold them as their Father. Their not being delivered was not for want of power in him; for, says he, "Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness." Sin was the cause. The text may be considered as a proclamation of comfort to those who were captives, till they should be released. It is designed to solace the hearts of weary saints and sinners to the end of time. Under the Old Testament dispensation, Christ comforted the weary, and spake to them by his servants the prophets. In the fulness of time he spake in his own person. Then was this prophecy accomplished when he said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." It is still fulfilled where Christ addresses sinners in his word and ordinances. It is the continued comfort of the church, that Jehovah has given to Christ the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. The phrase in the end of the verse, he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the *learner*, applied to Isaiah or any minister, signifies, that God daily excited them to duty and assisted them in it: that to comfort others it behoved them to learn experimentally: and in order to give instructions to sinners, they must receive them from

God. Applied to Christ, the phrase intimates that God prepared him a body, and bored his ear;—that day by day he listened to his Father that he might do his will; that his holy human nature was animated and assisted in his arduous work; and that to succour and comfort the weary he learned obedience by suffering, and had an experimental acquaintance with their trials.

In discoursing from these words I propose,

First, To delineate the character of those for whom provision is made,—the *weary*.

Secondly, To illustrate the gracious declaration, *the Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to the weary*. After which I shall endeavour in the

Third place, To explain the manner of procedure when Christ employs the tongue of the learned and refreshes the weary.

I. I begin with delineating the character of those for whom provision is made. While all have access to Christ, the weary only will improve it. Till sinners feel themselves in that situation, they neither know their need of the tongue of the learned, nor will take the benefit of the gracious words of the Redeemer. Therefore while Christ excludes none, he has persons of this description particularly in his eye.

1. The weary may be known from the *opposite* character. As we learn what light is by darkness, so

one description by the contrary. These of the opposite character are variously described in Scripture, and every account of them tends to illustrate that of the weary. They are said to be *at ease* in Zion. They neither feel their own misery, nor the affliction of Joseph. Sin within or around them gives them no trouble. They are neither disturbed by the dishonour done to God, nor the hurt to themselves. They are not disquieted by the suggestions of Satan. Like a strong man he keeps the house in peace, and the goods undisturbed. They are led by him; but they are led willingly, and without reluctance. Having made a covenant with Hell and Death, these neither break nor disturb their ease. They are said to be *asleep*. If there is any difference between this branch of their character and the last, it denotes a higher degree of security. Sleep is the native effect of ease. The spiritually weary neither find sleep to their eyes, or slumber to their eyelids. There is nothing in the sleep of sinners calculated to make them weary. They are in a state both of insensibility and delusion. Their dreams are such as please them, and till they awake their disappointment is unknown. Should they attend to the external performance of duties, or make a profession, still they are asleep. Not so the weary. In both senses they may well say, Our eyes, debarred from rest and sleep, thou makest still to wake. They are said to be *whole*. While of this description they cannot be weary, and feel no need of Christ's comforting medicine. A contrite heart and broken bones make persons uneasy, and keep them awake. As long as sinners are whole, they feel little or no pain.

It is far otherwise with the weary. They can scarcely tell where they feel most. They cry, as in Psa. xxxi. 9, 10, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly. For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing; my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed." In figurative language, should they attempt to move and employ any member, they find them all defective and diseased. Their hand is withered. Their eye is blind from their birth. Their legs are lame, and their loins filled with a loathsome disease. They find in experience "that there is no soundness in the flesh because of the Lord's anger: neither is there any rest in their bones because of sin." They are said to be *rich, and increased in goods, and standing in need of nothing*. In direct opposition to this, the weary know and feel that "they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Nay, these are the very things which make them weary. It is a great part of their distress that they are naked, and have nothing to cover their shame, and defend them from the storm; and that they are blind, and neither see their danger nor deliverance. Extreme poverty completes their misery, and makes them weary, as they have nothing to buy food, medicine, or raiment. If Job was weary when a wind from every quarter blew down his son's house, and destroyed his children; the weary find that all their refuges were built on sand. The waves and winds dashed against them with fury, and levelled them with the ground. Finding themselves destitute of shelter,

and uncertain but the next surge may hurl them into the ocean of destruction, they cannot but be weary. In fine, these of an opposite character *either think little about eternity, or reckon themselves prepared for it.* They have established a righteousness of their own, or trust to the general mercy of God. Having fasted twice a week, they are disposed to say, with the Pharisee, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers; or even as this publican:" or with the young man, "all these things have I kept from my youth up." I pray to God, do good to my neighbour, and injure no man; and I have no doubt of future acceptance and eternal reward. Like these, the weary in the text once thought themselves possessed of a righteousness of their own, enough to cover and cherish every part. Having wrought it out, they tried it on as a robe; but to their sad disappointment, instead of finding it like the clean garment of salvation, or the seamless robe of righteousness, sufficient to defend and adorn, they found it only filthy rags. Viewing themselves in the mirror of the law, covered with their own righteousness; instead of easing the smart, the sight filled them with horror and made them more weary. Though disappointed when they tried it on in the day-time, they fondly thought it might ease their pain in the darkness and silence of the night. Here, too, they were sadly deceived. Stretching themselves on it, they found it too short; and from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot it made every member awfully weary. But, had their pain been tolerable, (as it was not) their covering was unspeakably too narrow. Thus,

neither day nor night, can they enjoy a moment's ease; and how can they but be weary!

2. The weary may be known from other branches of the *same* character. As the careless and unconcerned are variously described, so are awakened sinners, and afflicted saints. These descriptions are characteristic of the weary. *They labour and are heavy laden.* Nothing is more calculated to make one weary than an insupportable load. They are sinners. They have got a discovery of their guilt, feel it a burden too heavy, and are ready to sink under it. They commonly have many other burdens. They are loaded with affliction, and tossed with temptation. Their way, too, is difficult, and dangerous, and this makes them weary. *They are poor in spirit and self-emptied.* Formerly they trusted in themselves, but "the commandment came, sin revived, and they died." Now they see nothing about themselves that can either afford them the least ease at present, or ground to hope for it at any future period. Thus overwhelmed and in perplexity, they cry, all refuge failed me, and no man cared for my soul. *They are hungry and thirsty.* These sensations in the extreme, must make them weary. Hotly pursued by the law, and the terrors of the Lord, they thirst for water, and there is none. Far off in a distant country, like the prodigal, they hunger, and fain would eat; but they can have no bread. In extreme want they would fill their bellies with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto them. But, should they receive the husks, like some roots they would neither satisfy their hunger nor abate their pain; or rather,

like others, prove poisonous and destructive. What a sad state! They have no bread and no husks; are pined with hunger and have nothing to satisfy their wants. *They are prisoners in a pit where there is no water.* They feel their prison and their chains. They are hemmed in by the law, and the curse of God. They are condemned and bound with strong fetters. A cruel jailer waits their execution. Their tongue faileth for thirst, but their pit yields no water. True, they are prisoners of hope; but they have not as yet felt the dew of Divine grace descending to solace their hearts. They are like poor criminals already condemned, and the gibbet erected—their execution determined, and the time uncertain, but wholly depending on the will of a Judge justly and highly incensed. In this situation they are represented as willing to give every thing they have for relief, and much more than they ever had were it possible. In the language of Micah vi. 6, 7, they say, “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

3. They are weary through great pressures which they *presently feel*. It is impossible to name all their pressures, or represent the weight of a single one. There is more weight in one sin, when the conscience is awakened, than men or angels can express. What then must be the pressures of innumerable evils,

when God sets them in order before sinners? Looking over their lives, the weary see every period filled with guilt. The acts of sin are as the sand on the sea shore, and the aggravations innumerable. Once they made light of the divine curse; but now they feel it a weighty pressure. They know it to be as great a reality as any sensible object, and more terrible in its nature and effects than a thousand temporal deaths in the most formidable shape. The highest gibbet or hottest furnace would be reckoned tolerable, could they be delivered from the curse. But this they scarcely reckon possible. Often they try to forget it, or shake it off; but it cleaves to them as the shadow to the body. Alone and in company, rising up and lying down, the hand writing of the curse is seen, and these words, terrible as thunder, fill their ears, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." They know that, if not delivered, the inevitable consequence will be "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." *The accusations of conscience are an heavy pressure.* Acting for the Judge, it cites the person, and reads the indictment, urges the demerit, and passes sentence without mercy. Their hearts condemn them. Wherever they go they carry along with them a crime and a court, a witness and a judge, the sentence and punishment. They are oppressed by the *power and prevalence of sin.* One would be ready to think that, when so affected with the guilt and danger of sin, if they could not atone for the past, they would offend no more. But sin is too

powerful to be interrupted by the fears of destruction. The enmity of the old man at the law of God is too great to desist on hearing the threatenings. At the very moment the sinner is reviewing his guilt, sin is active, and increases the sum already incalculable. In this situation, often sins of the deepest dye are committed. The heinous sin of unbelief, which rejects the counsel of God and his great salvation, prevails and is indulged. Satan is most diligent at such a crisis. It is impossible to conceive or express with what cruelty and assiduity he harasses. When lulled in security and false peace he did not disturb them. Now when they are awakened, he exerts himself to the utmost to aggravate their pain. If conscience forebodes fears, he makes them sevenfold. Would the weary indulge a single thought of mercy, he suggests that it is impossible to obtain it, and presumption to expect it. Were matters assuming a more favourable aspect, he casts another fiery dart and torments them. Under all these pressures, God's threatenings are familiar, and his promises seldom recollected: his arrows stick fast, and drink up their spirits, and they cannot but be weary!

4. They are weary through sore *fighting* after relief. Burdened with the pressures already named, they struggle hard for deliverance. Like the strong man in the agonies of death, they lay about them, and their own exertions make them weary. This struggle includes every attempt which awakened sinners make for relief. They go about to establish a righteousness of their own. They pray and vow. They aim at duties and enter into resolutions. Every thing

about their own righteousness is calculated to make them weary. It is burdensome to work it out; and when well advanced, it is insignificant and of no avail. All their vows and resolutions are like Samson's cords before the sinful heart. They frequently repeat them, and are always disappointed. Their hearts are pained with deep convictions of their sin and misery. They feel the spirit of bondage, and have much anguish and terror. So wedded are men to sin and a legal method of deliverance, that they often need to be shaken over hell to divorce their hearts from their own righteousness. With some these courses are of longer, and with others of shorter, duration. Following them, sinners truly weary themselves for very vanity.

5. They are weary through *fears* that matters will never be better. Disappointed in all their past attempts, they look forward, and guess and fear. Their want of success in former endeavours seems to justify their desponding apprehensions. In this situation their fears are numerous as the actings of the mind, and succeed one another as the harassed soul diversifies its object. If they think of *God*, they believe that he is a just God, but are unable to conceive how he can be their Saviour. They are satisfied that he will by no means clear the guilty, and that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Turning their attention to the *law*, they see it broad, in full force, and inflexible. It insists on perfection, and condemns the least failure. With the highest authority, it shows them their transgressions, and pierces their hearts with its sting. If they think of

the *threatenings*, they believe their veracity, and that they are directly against themselves. If their attention is turned to *sin* and *Satan*, they see them enemies, mad, sworn, and unrelenting. Should they for a moment leave all these objects, and once more attend to their *own doings*; what can they do which they have not done already? And what success can they now expect when they had none before?

6. They are weary through being *near to faint*. Already greatly distressed, and apprehending that matters will never be better, it is no wonder that they should be ready to faint. Their past attempts, instead of proving that they have any strength, only discover their weakness. They now feel all God's billows passing over them, and expect every hour to be swallowed up. Should any try to administer consolation, they consider it as too late, and rather shun it. Such kind offices and friendly attempts, instead of comforting their hearts, rather increase their sorrow, as only calculated to discover what others have gained, and they, in their apprehension, have lost. Every thing of this kind is considered as applying a plaister to a sore, when almost the last drop of blood is shed, or talking of scenes of social happiness to the man whose neck is fastened in the fatal rope. They consider such as acting a cruel, instead of a comforting part, and adding affliction to the afflicted. Is consolation then impossible? Sure he would need the tongue of the learned who would try to comfort the heart in such a disconsolate condition! Is such a one to be found? There is ONE, an interpreter, ONE among a thousand who has the tongue of the learned,

and can speak a word in season to him that is weary!

There are others, besides these whom we have now described, who are also weary, and may expect a word in season from him who has the tongue of the learned. These are the saints. They were once in the condition already described; but were shut up to the faith, and mercifully delivered. He who has the tongue of the learned spake a seasonable word, and said, Fear not, I will deliver from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom: he said, I who speak unto thee am he: I am mighty to save, and your Saviour: be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven. As he thus spake, he opened their ears and hearts to attend. They believed and had great joy. They knew in experience the kindness of youth and love of espousals. Happy days! They saw the Saviour, and bade defiance to their foes. They supped with him, and leaned on his bosom. Duties were their meat and drink, and ordinances the gate of heaven. They went from strength to strength, and did run the way of God's commandments with enlarged hearts. Happy days!—but these are now gone, and the saints again find themselves weary!

The Lord's people, like awakened sinners, have many things which make them weary. We may specify the following:

1. Sometimes they sin away the Lord's presence, and provoke him to depart. He is holy and jealous; and when his countenance, so essential to the happiness of the soul, is misimproved; it will be withdrawn, at least as to sensible and sweet communion.

These who act improperly while enjoying the Lord's presence, will be made to lament with heavy hearts when he is absent. His absence and their lamentations fill their hearts with sorrow, and make them weary. The spouse would not trouble herself to rise and open to her beloved; but she smarted^d before she found him. She had to rouse, rise, and run through the city, and suffer painful disappointments before she met with him whom her soul loved. Sometimes the Lord departs in sovereignty, and even then they that seek^e him will be weary. This was Job's case, when he cried, "O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him." Job xxiii. 3, 8, 9. At other times he is provoked to depart, and says, as in Hoséa v. 15, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early." Either way his absence is a great trial; but when the Lord's people are conscious that they have a sinful hand in his departure, this doubles their distress.

2. The strength of their enemies makes them weary. When the sun is down, beasts of the forest creep abroad. When the Lord is away, Satan rages, and sin seems to have recovered its former strength. Sometimes it runs out in one channel, sometimes in another. Now they are weary through the workings of unbelief, then through deadness and security.

Believers endeavour to oppose all their enemies; but the trial, as with Samson, discovers that the Lord is departed. Satan now employs both deceit and violence, and often finds himself too successful. The Lord is away and the heart heavy; and the saint finds himself nearly in the same situation as before conversion. He has little evidence of being in a gracious state, and is strongly tempted to conclude the contrary.

3. The Lord's people in this condition try duties and ordinances for their recovery; but these have lost their wonted virtue. Formerly they found them the house of God, and the gate of heaven. Now these pools are troubled, and their waters are no more healing. They frequently repeat the trial, but without the desired effect. Deadness pervades every exercise. Instead of their former sweet meditation, they can scarcely command a settled thought. Once they poured out their hearts with fervency and satisfaction; now their hearts are dead and their lips closed. Lately they heard the word as if none but themselves had been addressed. It was home, searching, and apposite. It opened up their disease, and pointed out the remedy. Seldom did they attend divine ordinances, without finding their own case unfolded with as much precision, as if the speaker had received information of what was in their hearts. Now he seems ignorant of their condition; or rather they can neither attend to what he says nor apply it. A communion table was a Bethel. Now the thought of approaching it fills them with terror. They find themselves no better in any other duty, and this

affecting change makes them weary. Though most distressing, this situation is not without its advantages. It impresses them with a sense of their absolute dependance, both for strength and consolation, on him who has the tongue of the learned.

4. They are weary through much outward fighting and many inward fears. They meet with much outward affliction. With some it is of long continuance, and they are chastened from their youth up. If the troubles of others are not equal in duration, they are measured out with greater severity. Some are in great outward want, and often, in human appearance, without any prospect of supply. In general, they are a poor and an afflicted people, "for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." They have many inward fears. One while they fear how they shall be supported under their trials; at other times how they shall be delivered. One day their hearts are harassed with fears how they shall pass through the wilderness; the next, how they shall get over Jordan. They are alternately perplexed with fearful apprehensions about duties and trials; and very frequently lest they should be cast away. At this crisis one may almost as soon number the thoughts of the heart, as their disquieting fears. Reduced to extremity, they often raise foundations. Their former happy state, when the candle of the Lord shone upon them, they consider as delusory, and the consolation they then enjoyed as a mournful instance of self-deception. The evidences of grace, formerly comforting, are now gone; and they dare not any more embrace or apply the pro-

mises which once ravished their hearts. In this distressed condition Satan does his utmost. His suggestions are cruel and malicious. Sharp and fiery are his darts. These only who have waded in the deep waters of temptation can form proper conceptions of what the saints then suffer.

Time would fail to enumerate the various trials which make the saints weary. We have many instances recorded in Scripture which merit the most serious consideration, and are written for our learning. The history of Job is an assemblage of trials. Perhaps there scarcely ever was an ingredient in the cup of others, grievous offences excepted, which was not in his. In David's lot there was an accumulation of the sharpest afflictions. Heman, in Psal. lxxxviii. gives an account of himself, which the dejected believer will find descriptive of his own case, and congenial to his feelings. Asaph was so tried, and affected with the seemingly unequal procedure of Providence, as nearly to conclude that religion was unprofitable, and that he had washed his hands in vain. Jeremiah was often in a spiritual pit still more deep and dark than the dungeon into which he was cast, and sometimes so reduced as to curse the day when he was born. If the saints in New Testament times have clearer light, they often meet with dispensations equally dark and distressing.— They are troubled on every side, greatly perplexed, and hotly persecuted. The saints will never find this world a peaceable or enticing abode. All who will live godly in Christ Jesus may lay their account with

constant opposition from an evil heart, a tempting devil, and a wicked world.

And now, in the review of what has been said, we may at present infer,

1. That all who are unconcerned about eternity and salvation are in a Christless condition. "They are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." When sin sits light, and duties are neglected; when the curse is neither felt nor feared, and when Gospel hearers care for none of these things, they may be sure that they are in an unconverted state. All who are in some degree thoughtful and concerned may never be turned to the Lord; but while sinners continue wholly thoughtless, they need have no hesitation about being in their natural state. The measure may be various, but salvation always begins in thoughtfulness and concern. Till sinners see their deplorable situation, they will never think of getting out of it. The language of every sinner who comes to Christ will be, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies."

2. That there is hope in Israel about the case of the awakened sinner. His condition is perplexing, and he is distressed on every hand. But often when the night is at the darkest, the morning approaches. Christ's eye is upon him. His bowels are moved for him; and he waits the proper season of doing him good. The greatest hardships to which he is reduced are necessary. Christ is tender-hearted. He does

not afflict beyond what is requisite. The sinner will see this hereafter, and should now believe it. If less would wean him from sin and self, he would not be so tried; but Christ is determined not to lose him. He will wean the heart from every other object to make room for himself.

3. That awakened sinners should come immediately unto Christ. They will never find satisfaction any where else. They should endeavour to get over their difficulties; while they stay away, these never will be less. The number and magnitude of sins often deter the awakened soul from coming to Christ. By staying away they contract new guilt, instead of lessening the old. An interest in Christ alone can rectify matters. When taking thought of applying to the Saviour, they are afraid he will not receive them. They should consider his infinite condescension, his urging invitations, and free promises. These are a most satisfactory proof that the most heinous sins are no obstacle on his part. Hear his own words: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool; and him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out." While coming to Christ is the highest privilege, it is also the greatest duty: "and this is the commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ."

In fine, from this part of the subject we may infer, that if believers have lost their sweet enjoyments, and again are weary, they should inquire into the cause. They will commonly find it within them.

Though the Lord is sovereign, yet when he withdraws, his design is to bring them to search and try their ways. If any sin is indulged, it should be confessed and forsaken. Faith should be exercised, and the blood of Christ improved anew. To make the saints submissive to this distressing state while it continues, they should meditate on the advantages of it. It humbles them, and makes them self-emptied. It keeps them prayerful and dependant. It makes their souls follow hard after God. It fills them with longing for that place where the weary are at rest; and while their warfare is protracted, makes them prize HIM who has the tongue of the learned, and can speak a word in season to him that is weary.

SERMON VIII.

ISAIAH L. 4.

The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.

THERE is an inconceivable fulness in Christ. Multitudes have been supplied from it, without diminishing it in the least degree. As it never can be exhausted, neither can it be fully unfolded. Many a tongue and pen have been employed in endeavouring to describe the fulness of the Redeemer, and many more will attempt the pleasing work. However penetrating they may be, it will find them full employ, and they will hand it down to others as scarcely begun, instead of being accomplished. A perfect description of the Redeemer's fulness surpasses human and angelic powers. Every thing about him is fraught with consolation. His Gospel is glad tidings. While the names of the Saviour express his personal dignity, they also proclaim his care about his members. His relations are calculated to inspire the sinner with hope, and the saint with joy. There is something in him suited to support and comfort his people. Christ hath so ordered it, that his servants and people, through his blessing, are useful to one another. They

mutually reprove, exhort, and encourage. But there is always something which none can do but himself. However fitly men of the most shining talents, and distinguished for grace, may address the awakened sinner, or disconsolate saint; they cannot ease the smart. Christ must speak himself. *His* word is always suitable and seasonable, powerful and comforting, and carries its own evidence. As in every other thing Christ has the pre-eminence, so in this of speaking to the heart; for the Lord God hath given him the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.

In the former discourse we endeavoured to open the character of the weary, and now go on, as was proposed,

II. To illustrate the gracious declaration, The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.

1. This declaration imports that the weary are Christ's peculiar charge. It is a faithful saying, that he came to save the chief of sinners. It was designed by his enemies as a reproach, that he was the friend of publicans and sinners; but he gloried in it. All without exception are called and invited to receive him. Nothing can be more explicit than the unlimited offer of salvation to sinners of every description. They who confine the Gospel offer, act in direct opposition to him who said, "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men. Ho, every

one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." But, while all are called, these only who are burdened and distressed will apply for relief. These only who are broken-hearted, and full of sores, will employ the great Physician. The weary are most particularly invited. Groaning under pressures, as we have seen, and sinking under a sense of guilt, while they greatly need relief, they tremble to apply for it. Distressed with their own unworthiness, and loathing themselves, they apprehend that they must be infinitely more objects of abhorrence to Christ. To dispel their fears, and encourage their hearts, he addresses *them* in a very particular manner. Many of the promises and invitations are most apposite to the weary. When he opened his mouth to pronounce blessings, he began with the poor in spirit, and the weary. All the Bible over, the Lord speaks most frequently, and emphatically, to such as are weary; otherwise the promise of relief and consolation could be no inducement to bring *them* to him. The text is replete with comfort. While the Saviour's work lies among sinners, it is worthy of observation, and should be attended to by the disconsolate and dejected, that Christ does not say, The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to

speak a word in season—to the legalist and self-justiciary, the rich and increased in goods, or such as apprehend that they are more holy than others, or to the penitent;—but, the Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary!

2. This gracious declaration implies that all the Persons of the Godhead are concerned about the weary, and had their case under consideration from all eternity. *Christ* is evidently concerned. He is the great speaker, and is qualified with the tongue of the learned. He it was who immediately conducted Israel out of Egypt, wrought wonders for them in the wilderness, and introduced them into the land of promise. He satiated every weary and sorrowful soul, and turned their sadness into joy. All the saints under the Old Testament bear testimony to his gracious condescension and support under their pressures. When in this world, his attendants commonly were the poor in spirit and the weary. If crowds gathered about him, it was to see his wonders, or eat of his loaves. The blind and lame, the deaf and diseased, the dejected and the demoniacs, had business of far greater importance. Now in his exalted state, his condescension is not lessened, and the weary of every description should still apply. He is among them as one that serveth. *The Holy Spirit* was given to him above measure. He was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. The tongue of the learned, including gifts and graces, and every requisite qualification, Christ received from the Holy Ghost. Thus he said, Isaiah lxi. 1—3, “ 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 ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God ; to comfort all that mourn ; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness ;” and all these gracious influences he communicates to his people according to their necessities. While Christ was furnished with every requisite qualification immediately by the Spirit, it was by the appointment of *Jehovah the Father*. He set him up from everlasting. He established him in the great office of Mediator. From the Father he received all the souls to whom he was to speak a word in season. The Messiah always asserted the will of his Father in his mission, both in the prophecies of the Old Testament, and his history in the New. He said, Psal. xl. 6, Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire ; mine ears hast thou opened ; or as quoted by the apostle, Heb. x. 5, A body hast thou prepared me. He invariably spake of himself in the days of his flesh, as sent and sealed by his Father.

The case of the weary was on the heart of these *three Persons* from all eternity ; and every thing about their situation was adjusted. It was fixed irreversibly, how, where, and when, they should feel themselves weary ; and the words in season which Christ should speak were likewise determined. From eter-

nity the very moment was settled when they should be in a case similar to that of the prodigal, when he thought of returning, and when they should find themselves in weariness and want. Then too it was fixed who should be the under-speaker, and what his subject; where it should be delivered, and on what occasion. And the purpose of the Lord shall stand. The stoutest self-justiciary, and all the herd of infidels, with all the cruelties of persecution, can neither stop, alter, or protract the efficacy of the tongue of the learned for a single moment. Providence brings the person to the place; the Holy Ghost puts him into the case of the weary, and then Christ speaks a word in season. *Then* shall the prey be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered! Little do the weary think that their extremity is the opportunity, fixed from eternity, to speak a word in season, and for which Christ has been *waiting* that he may be gracious. Did he speak *sooner*, he would seem as one that mocketh. Did he wait *longer*, the weary soul would sink beneath the stream.

3. It imports that our Emmanuel has all the qualifications requisite for relieving weary souls, and that his human nature, with all its furniture, was given him for this end, in subordination to the glory of God. *He is the true God*. As a divine person he *knows* the case of the weary. When they attempt to open their condition to a fellow-creature, however dear, the face of the listening friend often discovers that he cannot comprehend the complaint. There is *a something* which he cannot conceive. Nor can it be otherwise, when the weary themselves are unable

to express it, supposing the friend to have been in a similar situation; still, as in human faces, there is a distinguishing feature in every case, which diversifies it from all others. Thus the most sympathizing friends know the outlines only, or general condition; but God understands the secrets of the heart. The Lord Jesus made up all the ingredients in the cup which makes them weary. He mingled them, and made them drink it in the proper season. Thus he cannot but know how to deliver, and speak a word in season.

He is man. In his human nature he knows, in experience, what it is to be weary. Though he had not experience of the power and pollution of sin, he felt something corresponding when his holy soul was tempted. He actually experienced the other pressures of the weary, being in all points tempted like as they are. He bare the guilt of sin in his own body on the tree. He poured out his soul. He was hungry and destitute, and had no where to lay his head. He could scarcely refresh himself with a sound sleep without being overtaken by a tempest from the natural elements, or the still more violent storm of persecution. Like strong bulls of Bashan, his enemies compassed his death, with unrelenting fury. Forty weary days was he tempted of the devil in the wilderness, and was assailed with innumerable other attacks of shorter duration. He severely felt the pressure of outward distress, when he said, I may tell all my bones; and cried, I thirst. His Father put the cup of wrath into his hand, and he drank the bitter dregs. He well knew the painful trial of de-

sersion, when he cried, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring! O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent." He had trial of cruel mocking. " He was a worm and no man, a reproach of men and despised by the people; and all who saw him laughed him to scorn." At last he died, the cursed and ignominious death of the cross. In an unequalled manner, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and experimentally knows how to succour them that are tempted. Never could any with equal propriety say,

" And touch'd with miseries myself have known,
I view, with pity, woes so like my own."

4. More particularly, Christ's having the *tongue* of the learned implies, that *what he says must be very comforting in its own nature.*

Addressing the weary, should the speaker be ever so learned, and charm ever so wisely, it would be to no purpose, unless the *message* be comfortable. But surely HE must speak consolation himself, who gave that charge to his servants, Isaiah xl. 1, 2, " Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins." The Lord Jesus assures us that his message is most comfortable, when, as already quoted, he declared, Isaiah lxi. 1, that he was anointed to preach GOOD TIDINGS. This was the pas-

sage from which he opened his ministry, as we find Luke iv. 18. Having expounded it "all bare him witness, and wondered at the *gracious words* which proceeded out of his mouth."

To open the comforting nature of Christ's message, would be to open up the whole Gospel. GRACE is the amount: GRACE to the chief of sinners. He came to unfold all the grace and blessings of the new covenant. He came to declare and ratify all the promises. He took upon himself the old covenant. He fulfilled its precepts, and endured its penalty. He left nothing for the weary soul to do, but to come under his shadow, receive his righteousness, and share of his salvation. The amount of what he says is, "Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved." Addressing a weary soul in his day of power, he commonly unfolds some *special* part of the glad tidings, and that as a *key* to the whole. He makes some see the veracity, and taste the sweetness of one promise, and some another. To one weary soul he says, Though your sins be as scarlet and crimson, I will make them white as wool and snow. To another he makes that powerful intimation, "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness, and your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more." To a third he discovers himself in his majesty and meekness, his ability and willingness to save, and says, "I that speak unto thee am He." Whatever part of his gracious message, whether promise or invitation, he sends home to the heart, he prefaces it with such an intimation as, "Fear not, only believe," or, "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid."

It is of the last moment to weary souls, not only to be apprized of the gracious matter, but to be certified of its infallible veracity, and that it is well attested. To make it the source of consolation, they must also be assured that the benefits exhibited are suitable and free, and that, vile as they see themselves to be, they have equal access and welcome with any of Adam's race. All these things Christ gradually unfolds, and begins his message with these gracious words, "I that speak in *righteousness*, mighty to save." Above all, he discovers his own blood as what has made a full atonement for sin, and shows that it is of infinite value and efficacy. He declares that God is in him well pleased and reconciled; and that fury is no more in him. Then he invites the weary to come to him for rest, and at last shuts them up to the faith. Then their bands are loosed, and their fetters knocked off. They are brought out of prison, and have beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning. The sweets of redeeming love are now tasted. They drink the solacing streams of that river which gladdens the city of God. The greater their anguish was when the sword of Divine vengeance seemed lifted up to strike the fatal blow, and send them into everlasting destruction, the greater is their joy when, now pardoned at such expense, they taste the sweets of liberty and life. They begin to know the kindness of youth, and love of espousals. Believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

5. Christ's having the tongue of the learned implies, that his comforting message is delivered in a

very *peculiar manner*. Much depends on the manner. In this respect Christ infinitely excels all others, and never man spake like him. To open his manner would lead to a consideration of two things of vast magnitude, namely, the way he addressed weary souls when in this world, and the way that he speaks to them in his exalted state. The first casts great light upon the second. When he tabernacled in the flesh he addressed the weary with infinite *wisdom*. At a very early period he was found disputing with the doctors, and before his claim to Divinity and Messiahship was known, his wisdom was admired. He never opened his mouth without unfolding the treasures of wisdom. His friends admired him; and his enemies, filled with malice, said, Whence has this man this wisdom? When he spake to the weary, he evidenced that he knew all their difficulties and perplexities. He does the same still. He spake with *authority*. There was a remarkable difference between him and the scribes. He delivered his doctrine with that authority which became one who was certain that he declared the will of God by special commission. He spake with an authority which reached the heart, and made the strongest opposition vanish. Without proposing any inducements, or waiting to argue, he said to Matthew the publican, Follow me; and he instantly left all and followed him. He said to Zaccheus, Come down, this day I must abide at thy house; and he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. He spake with amazing *meekness*.—While he reproved his enemies with fidelity and sharpness, he addressed the weary with unparalleled

meekness. To one accused of adultery he said, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? she said, No man, Lord: and Jesus said unto her, neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." He said to a certain Pharisee, "Thou gavest me no water for my feet; but this woman hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head: and he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven." To the blind beggar at Jericho, who cried for mercy as he passed by, he said, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? and he pardoned his sins and opened his eyes. He spake with great *familiarity* and *plainness*. To the woman at Jacob's well he made a discovery of *herself* and *himself*, and said, I that speak unto thee am He. When Mary wept and thought she spake to the gardener; he said unto her, in his usual manner, Mary: she turned herself, and said unto him, Rabboni. Often he addressed himself to his disciples with the utmost familiarity; and gave convincing proof to all who applied, that he was of easy access. He spake with *amazing grace*. He declared he came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance, and gloried in being the friend of publicans and sinners. The greatness and number, the odious nature and heinous aggravations of sins never made him reject any who applied to him. The greatest sinners were pardoned, while the self-righteous were left in their sins. He spake in a most *suitable* manner, and in the fittest *season*. After taking the best aim, the most polished instruments can only shoot their arrow at a venture; but Christ never missed his mark. He hit

with unerring exactness both the case and the season. To the self-justiciary, bent upon meriting heaven, he said, Keep the commandments. If any insisted it was done, he detected the insincerity by an injunction to sell all and follow him. To a night disciple, who had not courage to confess him openly, he opened up regeneration. To the weary soul he immediately laid open his own fulness, and spake of nothing but pardon and peace. How seasonably did he address the expiring thief, when he said, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

6. It implies that he speaks with *energy* and *to the heart*. In this respect he differs infinitely from all other speakers. The energy of others falls short of the dignity of the subject; and they can only speak to the outward ear. Vast as the subject is, when he speaks, he adds dignity to it; and whenever he pleases, reaches the most obstinate heart. This particular cannot be better illustrated than by these words, Hosea ii. 14, "Therefore behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her," or, as it might be read, *to her heart*. This is a most gracious promise, and a pattern of the method he adopts in bringing sinners to share of his salvation. He brings them into the wilderness, that is, he puts them into the case of the weary, and then speaks peace and comfort to the heart. In respect of energy, when in this world, he so spake as to overawe his enemies. Once by a word he made them fall backward to the ground. Often he so spake as to convince and silence them. He addressed his friends with peculiar virtue, and spake in the power

and energy of the Spirit. He brake the power of the strongest lust, and dispelled the most tormenting fear. In their greatest inquietude, he spake peace, and his words conveyed consolation. He did secretly and silently to weary souls something similar to what he did openly to his apostles: He breathed on them, and said, Receive the Holy Ghost. While his words were accompanied with the power of the Spirit in all his characters, he particularly made the weary acquainted with him in that of the Comforter, so suited to their condition. When his disciples were disconsolate he spake much about the Comforter in the fourteenth and some following chapters of John's Gospel—a passage still adapted to strengthen and refresh the dejected. He speaks to the heart. His chief concern is with the heart. When stout, he breaks it: when broken, he heals it: when healed, he comforts it: and when partly comforted, he promises full consolation.

7. It implies that Christ *knows and improves the fit season* for speaking to the weary. "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" His servants often mistake the best season, but he knows it with infinite exactness. They would often apply consolation before the heart be sufficiently broken and weary. They would have the burden taken off before it be half heavy, or long enough carried. They would heal the wound before the putrid matter be carried off. In all these cases the consolation would be weak and inefficacious, because unseasonable. The love of Christ as far exceeds the love of his most favoured servants, as his infinite wisdom surpasses

their scanty knowledge. If they who watch for souls often mistake the season, much more do the weary themselves misapprehend it. Often they are for laying down the cross, when Christ sees it necessary for them to take it up, and walk on. They are for being taken from the field of battle, when Christ enjoins them to fight. They ardently desire to drink of living fountains of water within the veil, when Christ sees it requisite for his glory, and their spiritual advantage, that they should take a few draughts more of the waters of Marah. They grasp at comfort in this and the other ordinance, while he designs that they go a little farther. They are short-sighted and impatient. He is wise, and takes care of their best interest.

8. It is also implied in this declaration that Christ makes use of the tongue of the learned in the still small voice of his word and ordinances. He goes forth to the lanes and streets, and thither the weary must repair. The bulk of mankind have no relish for the Lord's word. It does not promise the articles which are their favourite objects; and when they read it, it has no savour or relish. The weary soul applies to it as the great store-house of the blessings he stands in need of, and the alone source of consolation. Applying, he finds it both infinitely suitable and excellent. Reading it under the influences of the Spirit he cries, It is the voice of my beloved, or in allusion to the woman of Samaria, Come, see a book which tells me all I ever did, is it not divine! Christ also speaks with the tongue of the learned in his ordinances. While the greatest part say of the Sab-

bath, What a weariness is it—the language of the disconsolate is, How lovely is thy dwelling-place!—There they sit under his shadow with great delight. Unconverted sinners may give outward attendance, but “hearing they do not hear.” They hear an outward voice or tongue; but the weary hear Christ addressing themselves. They are like Paul in the midst of his companions on the way to Damascus. These who were with him only heard a sound which they did not understand, and which produced no good effects. He heard a distinct articulate voice, addressed to himself. The weary either hear the same words, or words of the same import. The Lord Jesus powerfully addresses them and says, It is hard for you any longer to kick or oppose me: I am Jesus—a Saviour: I am Jesus of Nazareth—promised of God, and in whom all the prophecies are fulfilled: I come as the Lord’s anointed to save yourselves. As Paul when he heard the voice saw a bright shining glory; the Lord shines into their hearts, and they behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, and they get a sight of him as altogether lovely. Much passes between Christ and his people in ordinances. They pour out their hearts, and his secret is with them. The world may look upon it as deception; but there is something about Christ’s voice which distinguishes it from all others, and his sheep know his voice, and follow him. It now remains,

III. To explain the manner of procedure, when Christ employs the tongue of the learned, and refreshes the weary.

1. He gives them a deep sense of their condition, and makes them feel that they are weary. He kills before he makes alive. Without his interference they would continue dead and secure, dissipated and thoughtless. Drenched in the pleasures, or engrossed about the profits, of this world, they would never think to any purpose about the other. Without his efficacious teaching, they would continue ignorant of God and his law; strangers to themselves and their true condition; and unacquainted with their infinite debt, and approaching reckoning. Without him, like persons in an agreeable delusion, they would sleep on till in hell they should lift up their eyes. From eternity he thought on them in their low estate, and purposed their salvation. His love is immutable. The season of their deliverance approaches. He now undeceives them, and brings them to consideration. The commandment comes. He discovers the evil and danger of sin; and by his Spirit, as a spirit of bondage, makes them to tremble and fear. They have new and unthought-of discoveries. Many questions, which never occurred before, are now habitually and seriously revolved in their minds. They feel themselves as unhappy and restless in their present situation, as they apprehended themselves safe and comfortable in their former condition; and they wonder how they did not sooner discover their danger, and detect their delusion. Their former peace now aggravates their misery and distress. They are sensible that they had kindled a fire, compassed themselves about with sparks, and walked in the light of their own fire; and they are exceedingly astonished

that they have not received this of God's hand, to lie down in everlasting sorrow.

2. He makes a lively and impressing discovery that all others are comforters of no value. Brought to the condition already described, they need comfort, and cannot be without it. Many methods occur to their minds, and they try them all. Instead of giving satisfaction, every trial is a new disappointment, and proves vexation of spirit. They grow worse and worse. All refuge fails, and they have no help of man at all. The Lord allows them to continue seeking consolation at the broken cisterns of the creature, till they learn experimentally that these neither have nor can hold water. Like persons in absolute necessity, though they have been often disappointed, they make a fresh experiment. Hitherto unacquainted with the method of grace, they go about to establish a righteousness of their own, and, as we have seen already, attend to the external performance of many duties. All these courses, instead of atoning for the guilt, or breaking the power of sin, only discover the greatness of the one, and add fresh vigour to the other. Their sin and sorrow seem to keep pace with one another. With anxious and concerned eye they look to this and that duty—this and the other creature for relief: but every one of these makes answer, *It is not in me.*

3. He persuades them that he is well acquainted with their case, and that if HE cannot or will not help them, *no other* can or will. There is something wrought within them which convinces and persuades them that he perfectly knows their condition. What it is

they cannot describe ; but they think more about him than formerly. They read and hear what he has done for others. They meditate on his great love displayed so illustriously in his sufferings. They turn their attention to his promises, and would rejoice if they could only venture to apply them. They conclude that, if ever they are delivered, their relief must come from him. They begin to see, that should any others insinuate that they could work deliverance, it would be unsafe and dangerous to have the least dependance on them. They remember that they must meet him at his dread tribunal, that to Him they must give an account of all they have done, and that by him they must be finally acquitted or condemned. That last and important day engrosses their attention. Unless they have good hopes that matters are settled with him, their souls refuse consolation. They begin to consider if it is possible that he *can* save such guilty sinners as they are ; and if there be the least degree of probability that he *will* do it. In this train of thought they are led to consider the character and conduct of those on whom he has bestowed mercy. In these they find an amazing display of long-suffering for a pattern and encouragement to them who should afterward believe. They consider the boundless nature of his merit and grace. They consider his strong assurances and gracious invitations. Thus exercised, they are dreadfully discouraged by unbelief, and opposed by Satan. These inveterate enemies of the salvation of sinners constantly upbraid them with every crime. Collecting all their sins, these cruel foes raise them up as an insurmountable barrier between the Sa-

viour and their souls. Long do they stand *here* fearing that it will continue an insuperable obstacle. But while these enemies make powerful exertions in the hearts of the weary, there are other agents equally active, and still more powerful. Christ and his Spirit are pouring in divine influences, and shutting them up to the faith. About this period they are brought at least to say, "Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him!"

4. He now secretly inclines and enables them to spread their case before him, and cry for mercy. Before they apprehend in the least degree that he has spoken to them with the comforting tongue of the learned; he makes them cry to him with the weary tongue of the perishing sinner. In every conversion, Christ, by his Spirit, is the first agent and speaker *in fact*; but the weary the first in *his own apprehension*. Destitute and starving, the prodigal thought of returning to his father's house. Little did he *then* apprehend that such a thought would never have occurred to him had it not been produced by his Father. The jailer never would have asked *in such a manner*, What shall I do to be saved? had not the question been powerfully suggested by the Saviour. It is so with every sinner. The Lord works in their hearts, and constrains them to seek salvation. He humbles and convinces them, that they may see their necessity. He lays them low that they may cry for mercy. He pinches them on every side that they may seek the blessing even at a *mere peradventure*. He keeps them crying, that their hearts may be filled with insatiable desire; and he waits a little, that they

may be fully sensible that he alone can bless the sinner, and speak a word in season to him that is weary.

5. The Lord Jesus constrains them to hearken and listen if any gracious words will proceed out of *his* mouth in return to *their* cries. However hopeless their condition may appear, now they wait and listen. If they cannot say, we will hear what God the Lord *will* speak; at any rate they determine to hearken *if* he will speak. They know he speaks peace to his saints; and to be among that number is their *one* desire; though hitherto they dare not presume that they are among these favoured ones. After all, they cannot but recollect that his saints were great sinners, when he first spake peace to their hearts; and a ray of hope begins to animate their souls. The least degree of rest and comfort at once refreshes and supports them. They continue crying; and the very thought that he may be gracious invigorates their souls, and reinforces their strength.

6. He commonly allows them to meet with some discouragement either from the wiles of the adversary, or a little well-timed delay on his own part. The more they are reduced, and the lower they are brought; the more are their minds qualified for receiving comfort, and they become as it were the more capacious. They will be the more certain too that their consolation comes from the right quarter. At such a crisis Satan is uncommonly active, and his exertions most vigorous. He furnishes unbelief with every possible argument, and adds every degree of strength and force he can to the reasoning. He musters up every objection against the Lord's mercy.

He acts as an angel of light. The objections he urges against believing become the more trying to the weary, as they seem to flow from a regard to the glory and honour of the Lord. Satan and unbelief suggest and insinuate that it would tarnish Divine holiness to take notice of such a sinner, and that an expectation of mercy would be presumption, and that were they better they might perhaps apply; but in their present sinful plight they ought to desist. Christ has the wisest reasons for his well-timed delays. These will be discovered in due time to the weary. The longer they cry, Divine mercy will have the greater relish. The more they are reduced to self-despair, the more directly will they come to Jesus. The lower they lie, the more will divine grace be exalted in lifting them up.

Lastly, he keeps them firmly resolved to listen to no discouragement, and at length with the tongue of the learned he speaks a word in season. Often their discouragements seem wholly to deject their souls, enervate their strength, and exhaust their patience. But however unconscious of it, "they have hope as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail." Viewing a vessel at some distance, and ignorant of her lying at anchor, one would apprehend that, by the combined violence of the winds and waves, she would be dashed in pieces against the neighbouring rock, or sink beneath the swelling surge. But she rides safe at anchor. Many a storm has the weary soul endured. Already tempest-tossed, she fears the next will overwhelm her. But she has the anchor of hope fixed

within the veil. Apprehended by Christ, and supported by his omnipotent arm, she will weather every storm, listen to no discouragement, and in the Lord's time hear a word in season.

At length Christ speaks himself, and they listen to the tongue of the learned. The way they are led to conclude that he speaks is worthy of notice. They see no vision, nor hear any audible voice. In the duty of prayer, to which they are not now strangers, they begin to experience an assistance in their cries, a supply of suitable matter, a fervency of spirit, and gracious affections beyond their own power. Turning to the Lord's word their hearts are fixed. They are impressed with the majesty and grace of Jehovah. They discover that the vilest sinner has an immediate and full warrant to apply the richest promise; and they endeavour to apply it. In the very attempt they experience a strength superior to their own; and the effect is present support and peace. They resolve again to try the same course, and again they experience the same happy effects. Attending upon the Lord in the ordinances of his grace, they know experimentally the meaning of that gracious declaration, Isaiah lvii. 19, "I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off; and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him." They see their peace *created* by Jehovah, in the means of his own appointment. They now listen to the Lord's voice in his word, and experience effects evidently divine.

We shall now conclude with some practical improvement, and from this part of the subject we may infer,

1. That the Lord's work on the human heart is a great mystery. Scarcely at any period do the Lord's people understand fully what they feel; and they never can express it. Under convictions, often they cannot make language of their anguish of heart, and sometimes can give little account how it began. At their first awakening, they are ignorant of the great agent who brought them into such a condition, and of his gracious design. While every thing conspires to advance their best interest, they conclude that all is against them. The language of the weary often is that their hope is cut off, and they must perish. At the first implantation of grace, they scarcely know its nature, or how it is produced. When greatly dejected, and their sorrow at its height, it is most mysterious how a sentence or two from the Bible should irradiate their minds and solace their hearts. The continued communion which they have with the Lord Jesus, by means of his word, is also a great mystery. Most emphatic are the words of the Redeemer, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is *every one* that is born of the Spirit."

2. That instead of being dissatisfied with their sorrow and vexation, awakened sinners should be thankful and bless the Lord. Allowing the worst that the most disconsolate can say, it is surely better

to foresee danger, than fall headlong into it unawares. Without a sight of sin, the Saviour can never be sought or esteemed; and without being apprized of future wrath, sinners will never attempt to flee from it. Without the power of the Spirit, the most pointed external warnings will produce no happy effects. Much better endure sharp convictions for a short season here, than in hell without end. The keener the smart, and the sharper the suffering, there is the greater likelihood that application will be made to Christ.

3. That the Saviour is infinitely qualified for every part of the work of salvation. He can subdue the stoutest, and awaken the most careless. He can teach the most ignorant, and give eyes to the blind. He can empty the most self-sufficient, and fill the hungry with good things. He can bring the man most intoxicated with his own excellencies to his right senses; and exalt the poor sinner so abashed and dejected with his own unworthiness that he cannot so much as lift up his eyes to heaven. He can kill and make alive. He knows and improves the best season for every part of his work. He can make every situation in which the sinner may be, and every event which passes over him, conducive to his own glory and the salvation of the soul. When his own people wax fat and forget him, he hides his face and they are troubled. Should they vainly imagine that their mountain stands strong, he can soon make them weary. Near to halt, and sensible that their life lies in his favour, he can manifest forth his glory, see them again, and speak a word in season. This

word relieves them. Relieved, he guides them with his counsel through the path of life. He supports them in the hour of death, and crowns them with immortal glory.

4. From this part of the subject we may also see that such as are weary, instead of turning impatient, should wait at the posts of Wisdom's doors. These are various, and so contiguously situated, that we may wait at most of them at one and the same time. They should wait at the post of prayer. They should learn to pray without ceasing. They should pour out their hearts continually. Importunate prayer will prevail; and when the weary wait on the Lord in this duty, they shall hear a word in season. They should be much employed in reading the Scriptures. These have wounded them, and these alone can heal their wound. The precept and penalty declared and revealed in the Scriptures brought them to fear; and the precious promises contained in the Bible alone can produce comfort. The Divine testimonies should be the men of their counsel. They should wait on the Lord in public ordinances. Whoever may be absent, they should not. There the Lord commonly speaks a word in season. Aware of this, and sensible of their own need, they should hearken to his voice, waiting for a seasonable word to refresh their hearts. They should be much in meditation. When others have mused, the fire has burned; and they have equal reason to expect gracious aid and consolation. Though the vision tarry, they should wait for it. Though he may delay, their Lord will come, and speak peace to their hearts.

5. That any degree of willingness or ability to relieve the weary which the Lord's servants have is from himself. If faithful, they are ushers in his school. They declare his message, and they do it in his name. He is at great pains polishing them. He makes them weary, that they may speak to the weary heart. Paul comforted others with the consolation wherewith he himself was comforted. They receive all their gifts and grace from him. These he distributes in various degrees. He appoints to them all their station and work. Their labours are crowned with success or not, as his voice accompanies theirs. Very often he displays that he has the tongue of the learned in guiding and directing theirs. He makes them speak *to themselves*. Thus there is bread to the eater, and seed to the sower. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings he perfects praise, and his strength is perfected in their weakness. Moses complained of his want of eloquence. God said, Who hath made man's mouth? and encouraged him by this gracious declaration, "Now therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou wilt say." In general he enjoins great diligence in preparation; but *sometimes* gives them in the hour of duty what to speak; and *always* assures them that as their day is, their strength shall be. One while their heart is enlarged and their mouth opened: they speak with pertinence and fluency, for their own encouragement, and the benefit of the body. At other times they are poor and straitened, that their dependance upon him may be increased; and that the Lord's people may

look above means and instruments, and never forget that the Lord Jesus *alone* can speak a word in season to the weary.

6. That under such a Teacher who has the tongue of the learned, the weary *shall* learn, and have beauty for ashes. Many teachers have spent much time and pains, and given up their disciples as unteachable. Jehovah has given Christ the tongue of the learned, and the weary must be refreshed. He knows how to solace them, and he will do it. The weary have no reason to despond. They are in good hands, and they shall have rest. He never begins to work in a saving way, but he is successful. However deplorable or apparently desperate the case of sinners is when he undertakes it, his grace surmounts every obstacle, and proves invincible indeed. He finds Gospel hearers blind; but he makes them see. He meets with them dumb; but he opens their ears and they hear. He makes the stammering lips speak plainly. He gives rest to the weary, and at last brings them safely to that rest reserved in heaven. If he complains that his report is not believed, this respects the outward dispensation, when not accompanied with the tongue of the learned and Divine energy. But even then, his word never comes short of *his* design. The counsel of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. Though sinners should not be saved, the means of grace are not without effects. Some are convinced. Others tremble. All are inexcusable, and the weary are refreshed. Hear himself: "My word that goeth forth out of my mouth shall not

return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

Rejoice in the Lord, ye weary! If ye have not heard his comforting voice, you shall hear it. Having once heard it, you shall never cease to hear it. Others who have often addressed you, and been the instruments of comforting your hearts can address you no more. He who has the tongue of the learned is always at hand, and can speak a word at every season. He can speak in prosperity and adversity; in your worst and your best frames, in life and death, and beyond death. Having once heard his voice, you desire always to hear it; and you shall not be disappointed. Wait at the posts of his doors. Sit at his feet. So doing, blessed shall you be while you live, and happy shall you be when you die!

Hearken, ye careless sinners! You have a great load. You are insensible of it. This does not lessen your danger. The curse is upon you. God is holy. He will by no means clear the guilty. You have no esteem of Christ. You despise the tongue of the learned, and are unacquainted with the value of a word in season. Should you get enough of the good things of this world, you would leave Christ and his blessings to others. Though you had the whole world, it could not save you. Christ is a complete Saviour. He can make you happy with little here. At death, when all others forsake you, he will stand by you.

Consider, and be afraid! He who has the tongue of the learned, and urges you to hear a word in sea-

son, will, if you continue inattentive, speak with a tremendous voice at death. You must give an account. How can you appear before him? Where can you fly from him? What can you say to him? How will you bear what he shall say to you? You are warned. Be wise. It is time, high time to cry for mercy. It is not too late. Beware of delays. Consider the danger of sin. Consider till you are weary, and then the Lord Jesus will speak a word in season to your weary souls. Then you will experience his gracious and comforting work, the amount of which is thus expressed by the poet :

With learned tongue and Divine skill,
Christ speaks to weary hearts :
Removes their sin, death, every ill,
And blessings all imparts.

SERMON IX.

MATTHEW XXVI. 20—25.

Now when the even was come, Jesus sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

IT must be a very affecting consideration to a mind impressed with the evil of sin, and interested in the honour of the Redeemer, that the supper is seldom or never celebrated, but some crucify the Lord of glory afresh, and put him to open shame. Seldom are the partakers fewer in number than at the first celebration, and yet after the sop Judas betrayed him. The great Master knows the heart of every one who sits at his table, as well when there are twelve hundred as only twelve. Every part of Christ's sufferings touches in a tender manner the heart of the true saint; but scarcely is any scene more affecting than when he was betrayed by a disciple. Judas witnessed his miracles, heard his public discourses, and was admitted to private interviews in common with

the eleven. It is truly afflicting and alarming to consider that one, who had followed Christ, professed such love to him, and witnessed his holy life spent in assiduous and unremitting endeavours to glorify God and do good to mankind, should have betrayed him!

The scene in the text is one of the most affecting in all the sacred records. Christ was about to die. Ever mindful of his people, he instituted the great ordinance of the supper, and brake bread and blessed it. At this love-feast he opened his heart to his disciples, and treated them as friends. John leaned on his bosom. The rest sat around. Christ made the painful and piercing intimation that one of them should betray him. Unwilling to disbelieve their Master, and scarcely able to give him credit, they cried out, every one, Lord, is it I? He who had the greatest reason to suspect himself, was the last who spake. At length from decency, and to conceal his crime, Judas also said, Master, is it I?

This is a sample of what will happen in the church militant to the end of time. Christ will have enemies as well as friends. The tares and the wheat will grow together till the harvest. The most searching doctrine, and the strictest discipline, will neither deter the hypocrite from making a profession, nor detect his naughty heart. As far as *men* can see, he goes the same length with the true believer. His great defect is inward, and escapes the most vigilant eye. Some external strictness is necessary to his character. Induced by some sinister motive, he adjoins himself to the church. However small their number be, few societies are totally exempt from

persons of this wretched character. The church may be deceived. It is God's prerogative to know the heart. Have not I, said Christ, chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil!

In further discoursing upon this subject, we shall in the *first* place make some observations included in the passage.

Secondly, we shall more particularly delineate the conduct of Judas.

Thirdly, we shall endeavour to illustrate the conduct of the Redeemer on this memorable and affecting occasion:—and then direct you to the practical improvement of the subject.

I. It was proposed to make some observations.

1. Such is the power of sin in the ungodly, that, though long confined, it commonly bursts forth, and breaks over all restraints. Judas was covetous. This evil principle at different times discovered itself. At last it could no longer be restrained. Whatever external appearance it may put on, the carnal heart must be daily gaining ground, as the power of sin is not broken. While the heart is unrenewed, all that can be done is only bridling and curbing it. The powerful principle of sin is still increasing. Every restraint on the sinful heart contradicts nature, and must be burdensome; and none can be greater than when a powerful lust is restrained by a profession of religion. The sinner longs to cut the cords, and commonly, sooner or later, casts them away. Then, like the horse, long confined and now let loose, he

roams in the field of iniquity; and should any obstacle fall in his way, instead of stopping, it increases his mad career.

Many are the restraints which tend for a long time to keep the hypocrite from making a discovery of himself. Like Judas, he enjoys great privileges, has made a particular profession, and associates with the godly. Sometimes like him, he has had very particular warnings, either by some remarkable dispensation in Providence, some bodily affliction, or some awakenings of conscience, and awful forebodings of future punishment. These perhaps have brought him to some temporary consideration, some faint resolutions, or even vows about future seriousness and reformation. At last, however, all these, like the cords with which Samson was bound, prove too weak for the body of sin, and, instead of vanquishing, vanish before the temptation, as flax before the fire.

2. Christ perfectly knows beforehand all that his enemies either *intend* to do, or will *actually do* against him. They often form designs which they cannot execute. Thus the Psalmist prays, Psal. xxviii. 4, "Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their *endeavours*." Often the Lord has turned the counsel of the wicked into foolishness, brought to nought their counsels, and made their devices of none effect. He knows the first risings of sin in the heart, and accurately observes every wicked plot as it ripens. When his enemies take counsel against him, he is in the midst of them. He sits in heaven, beholds the sons of men, and holds his enemies in derision. He knows all things, and is

constantly attentive to Zion and every saint. The keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. Often has he predicted the designs of his enemies, long before they were formed. We have many instances of this in the prophecies, both concerning the church and individual believers. Christ frequently foretold that he would be delivered to his enemies; and here he discovered how well he knew the treacherous plot of Judas. Often when the schemes of the wicked have been brought to maturity, and were on the eve of being executed; in the critical moment the Lord has interposed, broken the snare, and given convincing proof of his perfect knowledge, almighty power, and watchful care.

He knows what his enemies will actually do against him. If he knows their intentions, we may safely conclude that he perfectly knows their deeds. He may say to them all, as to Pilate, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." If it suited his purpose, he could prevent the designs of his enemies, and when he permits them, while *they* discover their malice, *he* displays his wisdom in overruling them, contrary to their intention, for the accomplishment of his own ends. He knew that Judas would betray him. Had many known, when they began to make a profession of religion, the awful lengths they would go in sin; shocked at the thought, with Hazael they would have said, "But, what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" In all probability, when Judas first associated with Christ, he had not the least thought of betraying him.

3. The more Christ does by plain warnings and other means to prevent the sinner from sin, and especially some enormous crime, Satan does the more to urge him on, and forward the perpetration. This was exemplified in a striking manner in Judas. No warning could have been more pointed or plain. At a love-feast, newly instituted, just when the wretch had fully resolved on his execrable plot, Christ openly declared that one of them would betray him, and singled him out by giving him a sop. When he asked, Is it I? Christ directly assured him that he was the man. Some way or other Christ admonishes all his enemies under the Gospel. They are plainly warned in his word and ordinances, and often by strong convictions, and strivings of his Spirit. He puts a stigma upon some, and sets them up as beacons to others. While Judas was warned of the danger of indulging sin; he is set up as a monitor to every future generation. He stands a monument as conspicuous in the Scriptures, as the pillar of salt in a certain country.

After the explicit and seasonable warnings given to Judas, one would have thought he would have been deterred from the atrocious crime; but the more Christ did to prevent it, Satan did the more to hasten it on. He entered with the sop, and led the traitor captive at his will. In the heart of the true Christian there is a constant struggle between grace and corruption, or, in other words, between Christ and Satan. In the nominal Christian there is a corresponding struggle. With him grace and corruption strive; but there is an amazing difference. The

believer has received grace into his heart, and the hypocrite has excluded it. In the one case grace strives for admittance and reception, and in the other for protection and increase. The more Christ does to oppose sin, the more the strong man fears expulsion from his possession, and exerts himself to retain it.

Often when some crime awfully wicked has been devised and concerted, and the time fixed for the commission at hand, there has been an amazing struggle in the sinner's heart. His fears have been awakened, the dreadful consequences have presented themselves, and filled his mind with horror. Conscience makes the last effort, and loudly urges to desist. Greatly agitated, one moment he resolves to drop his horrid crime, and the next he determines upon the commission. Now he inclines to one side, then to the other. In this critical juncture Satan doubles his diligence, plies every temptation, and vehemently urges him on. At last he prevails, and the crime is perpetrated!

4. There is scarcely any thing more hardening than a profession of religion covering reigning sin in the heart. This is evident in the case of Judas. While Pilate, a heathen, washed his hands, and declared he was free from the blood of that just man, a professed disciple betrayed him. We have also a proof of this in the chief priests. Professing to look out for the Messiah, and searching the Scriptures which testified of him, they should have known him. From the words and works of Christ they had strong convictions that he was the Messiah. But with

unrelenting malice they compassed his death, and influenced the populace to insist for his crucifixion; while poor Pilate, not favoured with their privileges, made a stand against them, though not as he should have done. He constantly declared he found no fault in him, nor any thing deserving death. Often have publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of God, while chief priests and rulers have refused.

In the nature of things, no sinners can be equally hardened with those who cover lust with a profession of religion. Hypocrites are so accustomed to mock God, to make light of every sacred tie, to deceive their conscience, or lull it asleep, and trifle with religious duties, that nothing can be harder than their hearts, the devil himself hardly excepted. Scarcely could this hardness appear in a more striking light than in Judas. His kind Master, after eating the passover with his disciples for the last time, instituted the supper, and conversed about his sufferings and death. The hearts of the disciples were filled with sorrow, and Judas witnessed the affecting scene. One cannot but wonder how the perfidious wretch did not relent! Nominal Christians often witness melting scenes; but their hearts continue hard as the nether millstone. They have been invited in the most tender manner to receive Christ and improve salvation. The most alarming threatenings have been set before them, in a very affecting light, to warn them to fly from the wrath to come, and awakening dispensations of Providence have passed over them; but still their hearts continue hard and unaffected.

5. Christ often leaves his pretended friends to make a discovery of themselves, and permits something to fall in their way which proves the occasion. Two can scarcely walk *always* together unless they are agreed. Christ's secret enemies seldom leave this world, without giving some shrewd evidences that they are not as friendly to him as they profess. Judas had dropt some hints before that the honour of Christ was not very dear to him, and that other objects had the preference. We have an instance of this, John xii. 3—6, "When Mary took a pound of ointment of spikenard very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith Judas who should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." Christ and Judas had now been a long time together, and Judas thinks of parting. It is not an easy matter uniformly to dissemble and act against nature. As Judas had made some discoveries of his want of friendship, other hypocrites will do the same. On the other hand, now and then Christ gives some intimations that he knows and is dissatisfied with their conduct—that it neither escapes his notice, nor meets with his approbation.

At last, he permits something to fall in the way of hypocrites, which proves the occasion of a discovery. Sometimes he sends a storm, or measures out some adverse dispensation, and they discover their want

of love. The sunshine of prosperity fills the church with swarms of hypocrites; but the storm of persecution sweeps them away. At other times, a favourable opportunity occurs of gratifying their predominant lust, and they embrace it. The incidents and events calculated to discover false professors are various as their faces, equal in number with themselves, and all under Christ's direction.

The Lord Jesus has wise reasons for leaving close hypocrites to discover themselves. Such a discovery is a watchword to *his own*. It impresses them with the necessity of holy jealousy and frequent self-examination; of a lively faith and unceasing watchfulness; and of constantly abiding in him and receiving out of his fulness. It is a watchword to *all*. It warns them of the awful deceitfulness of the heart, and the indispensable necessity of regeneration. It is a vindication of himself and his doctrine, his holiness and honour. Unholiness in a greater or less degree will be seen about these hypocrites; and Christ will have it known that he neither encourages nor abets it. Thus Christ and the hypocrite part. Demas like, many forsake the Lord and his people, having loved the present world; and we may say of them, as in 1 John ii. 19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

6. When hypocrites have abused their privileges, and Christ gives up with them, Satan takes a more full possession, and then they stick at nothing. Judas

enjoyed the highest privileges, but abused them. He had seen much of Christ's goodness and power. Often had he witnessed his faithful zeal against hypocrites. Judas saw the days which many prophets and great men desired to see, but never saw; and heard the things which they desired to hear, but never heard. Instead of improving his exalted privileges, he waxed worse and worse. Having nearly reached the highest pitch of wickedness, he had now entered into the horrid resolution of betraying his Master for a piece of money. Christ gave up with him, as is evident from John xiii. 25—27, "The disciple who lay on Jesus's breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot the son of Simon. And after the sop, Satan entered into him, then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly." The amount of this affecting transaction is, as if Christ had said, Judas, take that sop, and it is the last article thou shalt have from me under the character of a disciple, if thou continuest in the horrid resolution of thine heart: take it, and while I point thee out to John as a traitor, and make a home and particular charge to thyself, know that yet there is room; believe and be saved: but if not, thy damnation is sealed. Satan is always present when the sons of God are together. He witnessed this last scene, and exerted himself to the utmost to get full and uncontrolled possession of Judas's heart. He got it. Then the traitor stuck at nothing, and neither will any in his situation. Then, like water

long dammed up, sin breaks forth and carries desolation along with it. Though professing Christians may not be aware of it, Satan watches as closely and critically *their* conduct, and *his* opportunity. The opportunity comes. Satan improves it. Then flaming professors, like Laud and Sharp, turn deceitful traitors and fiery persecutors. It is well known in Zion's history that apostates have commenced the most bitter and malignant foes. Accordingly some, lost not only to a sense of their former profession, but even natural affection, have informed upon their nearest relations, and delivered them up to the persecuting foe. We should not be ignorant of Satan's devices. We have a direction, 1 Pet. v. 8, which professing Christians should never forget for a single hour, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist, steadfast in the faith." We should be on our guard. Sensible of our inability either to watch or resist, we should employ the Keeper of Israel, who slumbers not nor sleeps. He has promised to watch with, for, and over his people.

7. There is no wickedness so great but the hypocrite can commit it, and none so great but the believer trembles lest he should be guilty of it. Judas actually betrayed Christ; and the very thought of such dreadful wickedness made the disciples, with trembling heart, and faltering lips, ask, Lord, is it I? We have abundant proof, in the Scripture and church history, that hypocrites are capable of the most enormous crimes. Zion has suffered more from these secret foes than all her avowed enemies together.

Real Christians fear the greatest wickedness if left to themselves. Though the disciples abhorred the thought of betraying their Master; yet not one of them ventured to assert that he was not capable of it, and only asked with astonishment, Is it I? The seed of all sin is in the believer, and he has found it begin to sprout. So often has his heart deceived him, that he believes it to be deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Knowing no bounds to its deceitfulness, he is jealous and fears always. He never hears Christ warn against the foulest sin, or sees the hypocrite guilty of it, but he is afraid lest, if left to himself, without momentary supplies of grace, and under the power of temptation, he should fall into it. These considerations make him go mourning, keep him diffident, and excite to watchfulness and prayer. Many perplexed hours the believer has from fear of what he *may* do; and the very thought of committing the sins to which he has been tempted, or against which he has been warned, pierces his heart, depresses his soul, and makes him ready to faint.

3. It is essential to true grace to be jealous; but the least pretension to jealousy in the hypocrite proceeds from decency, or some external motive. Every person possessed of grace, in proportion to its strength and vigour, is self-diffident and jealous. When Christ made the charge, John did not suspect Peter, nor Peter John; and none of them suspected Judas. Instantly and without exception, the eleven cried out, Lord, is it I? Most probably they all cried so at one and the same time; or, at any rate, about such an

alarming charge, did not wait the slow form of regularity. When Christ made such a home, heinous, and direct charge, the eleven had not far to seek for an answer. From the abundance of their hearts their mouths spake. Prompted by love to their Master, an abhorrence of the crime, and a consciousness of innocence, they exclaimed, "Lord, is it I?" With *them* this question was the spontaneous burst of love, fear, and every grace. Influenced by different motives, last of all Judas dragged out "Master, is it I?" One scarcely knows how to account for the traitor's conduct when he asked this question. As far as they knew their hearts, the eleven could not but be conscious that they had neither thought, said, or done any thing which laid a foundation for such a charge. It behooved him to know the contrary. But studiously to conceal the truth, induced by the example of the disciples, and to avoid singularity, he stammered out, Master, is it I? The *time* when he asked the question betrayed a consciousness of guilt; the *manner* of asking it was expressive of that effrontery peculiar to hypocrites; and the question *itself* was an instance of that contempt of Omniscience which ruins the nominal professor. It was a question which he ought never to have asked, and which, in all probability, he never wished to be answered.

We shall only further observe, that when Christ's enemies discover themselves, and desert and oppose him and his interest, his friends appear, and make vigorous exertions in his cause. If Judas betrayed want of love to the Redeemer, the disciples evinced that theirs was genuine and strong. If he formed the

resolution of betraying him, they gave ample and explicit testimony of unfeigned love to his person and interest. Grace improves every opportunity of promoting the Redeemer's cause, and is peculiarly active when open enemies attack, and secret foes desert it. We have an instance of this recorded John vi. 66—69, "From that time many of the disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." This was an open confession of Christ made directly by Peter, in which the rest joined him, and was occasioned by the apostacy of many professed disciples. Often grace in the heart, like Israel in Egypt, the more it is oppressed, the more it grows: and among the many instances of oppression, scarcely is any felt more severely, or produces more immediate effects, than the treachery and apostacy of pretended friends. Like an army fired with zeal for liberty and a love to their country, true Christians, enlisted under Christ's banner, make stronger exertions in proportion to the number and malice of deserters.

From this part of the subject we may infer,

1. That a great sinner may be a great professor. Judas made the same profession with the eleven. A high profession of love to Christ, and superlative love to sin, often dwell together. The Pharisees made high professions of religion, and were inexpressibly wicked. With peculiar emphasis did Christ give

them the designation of a whited sepulchre. The monument or grave stone, beautifully ornamented, pleases the beholder, while it covers the most nauseous putrefaction. Often the gifts and appearance of the hypocrite may please others; but could the rottenness of his heart be seen, it would be offensive and loathsome, as the putrid carcass which hourly feeds the worms. Christ says elsewhere, concerning these hypocrites, that they make long prayers, and devour widows' houses. Like Judas, many a professor has betrayed Christ with a kiss.

2. Great grace may consist with great fear. The disciples were very gracious persons; but such an alarming and home charge made them tremble, and filled their hearts with fear, lest they should prove the traitors. In the history of the saints a fear of being mistaken, falling away, or giving offence, will be found strongly characteristic of genuine grace." Fear is so descriptive of the real character of the true Christian that he is often denominated by it, and called a fearer of the Lord. A filial and holy fear keeps the Christian depending on Christ for strength, and leads him to watchfulness against his enemies, and over his own heart. Grace makes progress in proportion to this fear.

3. Of all sinners none are more cherished by Satan, or better fitted for promoting his interest than the hypocrite. When the Jews could not prevail against Christ, a false disciple betrayed him. What befell the head, has often happened to his cause and members; a Judas has betrayed them. While Satan hates the power of godliness, he has no objection to

the form. Persons professing a form, but denying the power, are eminently calculated to injure Christ's interest, and promote Satan's. They have better access to know how matters stand in Israel, and Satan employs them as spies. Sometimes he makes the hypocrite a clog on the Lord's people to retard them; at other times a pest to disturb, and sow discord among them. Sometimes he makes him a great discouragement; at other times a great temptation to the true Christian. The truth of these things are evident from many passages in the Scriptures. The tares are ready to choke the wheat. Evil communications corrupt good manners. The foolish virgins entice the wise to sleep. Hypocrites open a large field for Satan to act in the church.

4. That Gospel hearers in the entry and progress of their profession should frequently inspect their hearts, and maintain a holy jealousy lest they be mistaken. Without watching and keeping the heart, we must be strangers at home. To point out the great advantages of a holy jealousy, the Scriptures assert, that blessed is the man who feareth always. Jealousy leads the Christian to fix the one eye upon God, and the other on his own heart and conduct. Thus "he stands in awe and sins not, but communes with his heart;" and "fears lest a promise being left of entering into God's rest, he should seem to come short of it." Like a trusty and vigilant guard, jealousy watches at once over the old and new man;—over the new, to see if he exists in the heart, and prospers:—over the old, with his allies, to oppose their deceit and violence. If, at any time, the Christian sleeps, he finds, in his sad experience, that the watchful ad-

versary has improved the opportunity, and sowed tares.

5. That hypocrisy must be in a singular manner odious to God. Such a heart and conduct as Judas had are directly contrary to that truth, in which God delighteth. Hypocrisy betrays a great contempt of God and his perfections. The language of the treacherous heart is, "The Lord shall not see; neither shall the God of Jacob regard." Hypocrisy treats the omniscient Jehovah as if he were on a level with the idol gods of the nations, "which are silver and gold, the work of men's hands: which have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they but they see not: they have ears but they hear not, &c." Well did Isaiah describe the hypocrites, when he said, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honour me with their lips; but their hearts are far from me." They deal with God as they durst not with their fellow-creatures; for which they are sharply reprov'd by the Prophet Malachi. He charges them with offering the blind, the lame, and the sick for sacrifice. Having emphatically asserted the heinousness of such conduct, he appeals to them if they could have presented such offerings to their governor, or if he would have been pleased, or accepted them. He charges them with having a male in their flock, and vowing and sacrificing unto the Lord a corrupt thing. Jehovah himself addresses them. He appeals to themselves and asks, should I accept this of your hands? He curses such deceivers, and proclaims his own Majesty as infinitely enough to eradicate from the heart the least thought that such deception could be pleasing to him, or that he

would accept it: for “I am a great King, saith the Lord of Hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.” Hypocrites are the same in every age. They always treat the King of heaven and Governor of the world as they neither would, nor durst a fellow-worm, who is governor in their native land. Wo unto you, hypocrites!

If communicants would desire to know whether they have betrayed the Son of man at his table last Sabbath* or not, they might attend to these things. These are the most likely to have betrayed him who have neither suspected, nor examined themselves, since they sat at his table. Owing to custom and exhortation, many have a kind of seriousness, a superficial self-examination, and a cursory review of their conduct before they communicate; but, when the solemn ordinance is over, they consider themselves delivered from these exercises *of course*. This conduct proves their previous exercise both unscriptural and unprofitable; and makes it evident that they had wrong views of the sacrament, and are unacquainted with the power of sin and devices of Satan. Though self-examination, at certain times, should be practised with greater care and punctuality, yet it should be habitual, as well as actual. It is peculiarly fit and proper after communicating. After we have been at the Lord’s table we should review, and notice what our exercises were. We should observe our graces, and see if they have been vigorous or languid. We should take particular notice if we have had any comfortable additions to our attainments. Frequently all the benefit of solemn ordinances is neither ob-

* Preached the Sabbath immediately after the celebration of the supper.

tained, nor enjoyed at the time of communicating; and the advantage of the ordinance should never end with it. Inspecting ourselves after such distinguished profession and solemn privilege, would tend to maintain the impression that God's vows are upon us, and that we have opened our mouths to the Lord. It would be eminently calculated to prevent declension and apostacy. If these, and such meditations and exercises, have not been in some degree familiar to your minds, since you were favoured with the solemn ordinance, the symptoms are unfavourable. The Christian life is that of a warrior, and wayfaring man, The supper furnishes the saint with armour, and teaches him to wield it. It is also a meal to strengthen him for his journey.

We would insist with the greater earnestness for watchfulness after communicating, because sin and Satan never exert themselves more vigorously than after times of special privileges. The hour and power of darkness immediately succeeded the first celebration of the supper. The great Head was condemned, and crucified. Judas betrayed and sold him. Peter denied him. The rest forsook him and fled. Professing Christians are often off their guard after the sacrament. Satan is never more vigilant. Watch and be sober. Inspect your hearts. Cry for momentary supplies. Never forget that he, and he only, who endures to the end shall be saved. Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Pray without ceasing. So doing, instead of coming to such a miserable end as Judas, you will have the highest reason to rejoice evermore.

SERMON X.

MATTHEW XXVI. 20—25.

And when the even was come, Jesus sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

OFTEN the clearest day ends in a cloudy and stormy night. Many, enjoying the richest privileges, and making the purest profession, have cast the Lord's cords from them, and apostatized from the good cause they had espoused. Their lamps, not fed by the oil of grace, are extinguished by the wind of temptation. The naughtiness of their hearts, long latent, breaks forth, and discovers their true character. We have a striking instance of this in Judas. Having long followed Christ, and professed an unfeigned attachment to his interest, at last he betrayed him. The same causes produce the same effects. The dreadful treachery and fatal end of Judas are recorded to warn nominal professors to the end of time.

Having made some observations to explain the passage, we now proceed,

II. To inquire more particularly what brought Judas to such heinous iniquity. On this we observe the following things.

1. He was insincere in taking up his profession. Insincerity is the source of many ills, and was his radical error. At his entry, he gave Christ the hand and Satan the heart. This error is seldom rectified. It is a critical period with the sinner when he takes up a profession of Christ. There is commonly some stirring of affections. Then Christ does much to win the heart, and Satan makes strong exertions to retain it. If he is successful then, he is less afraid afterward. He considers it of the last importance to his cause, if he can keep the sinner from being thoroughly awakened, and make him settle on his lees. If the heart is not surrendered to Christ at the outset, any little love which the sinner appeared to have soon waxes cold. A work properly begun is well advanced and half ended. This holds true both with the real Christian and nominal professor. The true Christian in commencing a disciple of Christ has given him his whole heart, and the important business of working out his own salvation is greatly advanced. He is in Christ. To him there is no condemnation. He has the Holy Spirit in him. The spiritual life is begun, and his path is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The power of sin is broken, and though it

should make lively exertions, it shall not have dominion. His enemies have got a fatal wound, and he shall be more than a conqueror. He is possessed of grace which is glory begun, and he shall appear before God in Zion. On the other hand, the hypocrite, taking up a profession with insincerity, has greatly advanced the interest of sin. In the language of the parable, Satan saith about such an one, "I will return to my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." The man who sets to sea in the Christian life without a vessel, commonly goes to the bottom. But he who embarks in and with Christ, though storms should assail, though he should reel and stagger, and be at his wits' end, shall certainly see the desired haven.

2. He was unprofitable in the progress of his profession. Never had any a fairer opportunity to make progress. He heard the glad tidings of salvation spoken by the Lord himself. He walked up and down in company with the Saviour and salvation. He was admitted in common with the other disciples to the places where Christ poured out his heart to his heavenly Father. He could not be altogether ignorant of the Redeemer's groanings and wrestlings, his strong cries and tears. He had the best instruction, and the purest pattern. He heard the heavenly doctrine of the Saviour, and saw it exemplified in his life.

Justly might Jesus have said concerning that traitor, What could I have done more! But instead of reaping advantage, or being bettered by such privileges, he grew worse and worse. Asp like, he drew venom from the finest flowers, and converted the heavenly manna into poison. While Christ turned water into wine, Judas converted the wine and milk of the Gospel into a cup of destruction. In this course he continued, till at length he formed the hellish design of betraying his gracious Master, and executed it. All who are unprofitable under the precious means of grace are fast ripening for destruction. Sin is cherished and advances to maturity. The Gospel purely dispensed is never without some effect. It either kills or cures. Where it is not the savour of life unto life, it will be the savour of death unto death. While the other disciples had spiritual life cherished under the beams of the Sun of righteousness, and were ripening for glory, Judas cherished the most deadly lusts, and ripened for destruction.

3. Under his profession, he allowed and indulged a secret predominant lust. This was the dead fly that hurt him. They who name the name of Christ should depart from iniquity. Like Nathanael, they should be free from *allowed* guile. An honest profession is incompatible with the wilful indulgence of any sin. While other crimes destroy their hundreds, a predominant lust indulged ruins its thousands. In vain do men wait at the posts of wisdom's doors, while any sin is cherished in the heart. It grows worse by restraint, and gathers strength from the outward opposition; but will at last break out. Judas

had a covetous heart; and the indulgence of this evil and idolatrous principle proved fatal to him in the end.

4. He entered into temptation. This is most dangerous for a professed disciple of Christ. It is much easier to enter into temptation than get out of it. Nothing can be more hazardous than to tamper with sin. Judas's covetous heart was always meditating mischief, and devising every method to gratify itself. So violent was the principle of avarice that no mode of gratification seemed too gross. He said to the chief priests, "What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" This was a question which he should never have asked. The thought of selling his Master for money never should have entered his mind; or if it did, it should have been immediately rejected with the greatest indignation. Had he sought an hundred times more than he did, the chief priests would have cheerfully given it. Their malice was equal to his covetousness; and both were insatiable. We may easily conceive what they would have given to Judas, if we consider their cursed liberality to the watch which guarded the sepulchre. We are told, Matth. xxviii. 11, 12, that when the guard showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done, who being assembled with the elders, took counsel, and gave LARGE money unto the soldiers to bribe them to say that his disciples came by night, and stole him away while they slept. This money is not specified, but it is expressly called a large quantity. From their conduct in this instance,

we are sure that however high Judas had made his terms, they would have heartily agreed to them, and finished the hellish bargain.

The dangerous consequences of entering into temptation are inconceivable, and almost innumerable. The Lord is provoked, and Satan encouraged; the mind is blinded, and the heart ensnared; sin is strengthened, and a temporary vail drawn over the fatal effects. While Judas is a signal instance of the danger of entering into temptation, Gehazi is another. The love of money is the root of all evil. It hurried him on till the leprosy, which Jordan lately washed away from the Syrian, "cleaved to him and his seed for ever; and he went out from Elisha's presence a leper as white as snow." In believers too, who have the root of the matter in them, we see the danger of entering into temptation. David got his bones broke; and Peter entering into the high priest's hall, denied his Master. With amazing propriety did Christ teach his disciples to conclude their petitions to their heavenly Father, with this important address, "and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

5. He was awfully hardened. We can never enough wonder at the hardness of his heart. It was surely hard as the nether millstone. He would have appeared hardened enough had he been only in company with Christ once or twice, and then betrayed him; but how shocking to have attended him all the time of his public ministry, and sell him for thirty pieces of silver! It was wicked beyond conception

to betray one whom he had often witnessed making the blind to see, the lame to walk, and the dead to arise! How could he forget that the winds and the waves obeyed him; that the devils were subject to him, and were dispossessed at his pleasure! How could he be unmindful that at different times, a few loaves were so multiplied as to feed thousands! How could he dare to form the plot in his heart, and once think to conceal it from his Master, who had given so many evidences that thoughts and words were equally intelligible unto him! But, though Judas had never had another proof of Christ's omniscience, the warning given him in the text was conclusive. His treacherous plot till then was a profound secret. He had never revealed it to a single person. None entertained the least suspicion of him. But Christ gave him satisfying evidence that he knew all that was in his heart. To hear his Master announce before all the disciples that one of them would betray him—to be an eye-witness of that great sorrow which filled the hearts of the eleven—to be conscious that the charge was just, and that his heart had devised the plot—to persist in it without the least remorse, evinces an hardness of heart inconceivable, and, if we had not the best testimony, almost incredible! One would have thought that the very discovering his design would have prevented his persisting, and that his being warned at a love-feast would have made him abandon it with abhorrence. But, as all things respecting duty or trial, are possible to him that believeth; all things in the way of sinning seem

possible to him that believeth not. Nothing is too criminal or atrocious for the heart of a treacherous hypocrite and malignant apostate. What will not sin do when left to itself, and the influence of the devil! What a wretch must the traitor have been, when neither the unparalleled kindness of his Master, nor the awful wrath which he incurred by such conduct, in the least affected his heart, nor made him change his purpose! While his connexion with Christ, his distinguished office, and peculiar privileges aggravated his guilt; they rendered the Redeemer's sufferings more exquisite, as he had long before foretold, when he said, Psal. lv. 12—14, "For it was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance: we took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company."

Surely hardness of heart was brought to the highest pitch in Judas. His heart was obstinate, his neck was an iron sinew, and his brow brass: or if any thing can be more inflexible than these metals, his heart was as an adamant stone. When we consider his sin and his end, never were these words of the wise man more signally verified or better applied, "He that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief."

This hardness is not brought to such a degree all at once. The natural obduracy of the heart makes great progress under the Gospel; and when hypo-

crites have long abused their privileges, God, after long waiting and much pains, often gives them up to judicial hardness. There cannot be a more awful situation than this out of hell. Then sinners are filled with their own ways, and walk in the counsel of their own heart. God, long tempted and provoked, lets them alone, and often swears in his wrath that they shall not enter into his rest. All who make a profession of religion should guard against the least beginnings of hardness of heart, and above all, they should seek with unremitting ardour the accomplishment of that precious promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh: and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them: and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God."

6. Judas parted with his Master and profession for a thing of nought. The want of any due proportion between the article parted with, and the value received greatly aggravates the guilt. A man makes a poor bargain who gives his soul in exchange for the whole world, but a poorer still when he parts with it for thirty pieces of silver. Had Judas lived to enjoy his money, it would have gone but a small length, and soon been expended. When he returned it under the power of strong conviction, and fastened the halter about his neck; it was of no use at all. So it will be with all who throw up their profession.

Whatever advantages may apparently accrue to them, the curse of God is on their basket and store as long as they live; and at the hour of death, their supposed advantages will be of no avail at all. In the wretched course of parting with the blessing for a thing of nought, Esau went before Judas, and set him an example; and thousands have followed him. It would be well if Gospel hearers would count the cost before they take up a profession; and, when about to cast it off, they should carefully consider if there is any proportion between it and the temptation. They should weigh matters in the balance of the sanctuary.

7. During the whole of his profession unbelief reigned in his heart. He neither believed, nor was affected with his lost situation by nature. The Divine testimony in the Scriptures was discredited and disregarded. Salvation from the guilt and power of sin he never sought. Christ as the sent of God and Saviour of sinners he never implored. The Divine testimony about Christ in the Scriptures, and Christ's about himself, he entirely rejected. Eternal concerns were never the chief object. Duties were superficially performed, and he had no complacency of heart in them. In his whole conduct he was actuated by sinister motives. Unbelief in its full and unbroken power added strength to every part of the body of sin, and invigorated the old man. Present and seen objects had more influence on his heart, than the great unseen objects exhibited in the promises. What Peter said in hurry, confusion, and without thought,

with some variation, expressed the habitual language of Judas's heart, Depart from me, O Lord, for I desire to be a sinful man. Powerful as the principle of covetousness was, without unbelief, it could neither have led him to betray his Master, or murder himself.

We only add, that he actually betrayed his Master. He had not that knowledge of Christ which is necessary to a believing on him for salvation; but he had enough to enable him to betray him. He was so little acquainted with his real worth and true character, as made him prefer every other object to Christ. Unconcerned about his own salvation, and destitute of love to the Saviour, he proceeded the awful length of betraying him. While in this world, we have but faint ideas how any sinner, who has heard the Gospel, can meet Christ, and appear at his judgment-seat: but how Judas could appear before him, and so soon after he betrayed him, surpasses all conception! To the believing mind it opens a scene at once tremendous and pleasing, awful and delightful,—to figure the chief priests and scribes, Pilate and Herod, Judas and his band, the Sanhedrim and soldiers, and the whole group of enemies standing at the tribunal of that Person whom a little ago they summoned, and maltreated, condemned and crucified between two malefactors.

Did it enter into our plan, it might be both pleasing and profitable to contrast the conduct of the eleven with that of Judas. In them we would find *faith* a prevailing principle. It made them cleave to their

Master, and continue with him in his temptations. It opened their hearts to attend to his precious instructions, and, though not so strong as it should have been, filled them with good hope of a comfortable issue to his trials and theirs, though they knew not how. We would discover in them unfeigned *love* to their Master. They trembled at the thought of his suffering, but unspeakably more at the thought of being active or instrumental in betraying him. Greatly ignorant of the design and end of his death, they would rather have heard of their own sufferings than his, and rather endured death than witnessed his crucifixion. Instead of indulging lust in the heart, and seeking opportunities of gratifying it, they were filled with the most bitter and genuine *sorrow* for sin. Their grief flowed from the best principle. They hated sin as against their Master; and what dishonoured or injured him, greatly wounded their hearts. It is justly reckoned an evidence of genuine sorrow when it flows, not from views of the danger of sin as destroying the soul; but from the evil of it as dishonouring to the Saviour. The disciples evidenced much *self-diffidence*, and some sense of the unknown mystery of iniquity in their hearts. Asking, "Lord, is it I?" was a frank acknowledgment that they had not seen to the bottom of that sin which was within them. Unlike the self-applauding spirit of the hypocrite, they preferred every one the other to himself. Instead of that suspicious and censorious temper characteristic of nominal professors, they had great *charity* for one another, and of that genuine kind which

thinketh no evil. In place of that hardness of heart which ruined the traitor, their hearts were *soft*, susceptible of impressions, and melted immediately at the intimation of such a charge as their Master being betrayed by a disciple. Their hearts to intimations of this kind were as wax before the fire. They had followed Christ, and professed him with that truth and *sincerity* in the inward part in which he delights. They were bettered and greatly improved by the advantage of being with him, and had made *considerable progress* since their first acquaintance. Instead of rushing deliberately into temptation, the *first hint* of danger was sufficient alarm, and stirred up all that was within them to watch and guard against it.

We now go on, as was proposed, to the next thing in the method, which was,

III. To open up Christ's conduct on this memorable occasion.

One scarcely knows whether the conduct of the Redeemer, or that of the traitor is most astonishing.—the one for a superabundance of patience, and the other for the consummation of iniquity. There are two mysteries which occupy the believer's attention while here, and will find him employ to all eternity, namely, the mysteries of grace and corruption.

1. Christ dealt plainly with Judas. He did not merely insinuate that he knew or suspected his wicked intentions, but told him explicitly. Dreadful as the

charge was, Christ brought it home, and said, Thou art the man. In terms the most unequivocal, he warned him of the sin, and set the danger before him. Thus in verse 24 he addressed him in the following alarming language, "The Son of man goeth, as it is written of him: but wo unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed: it had been good for that man if he had not been born." This stripped Judas of every excuse, and rendered his wickedness still more aggravated. But in spite of the plainest warnings, he persisted in his execrable purpose. Though sinners are inattentive, or will not believe it, Christ gives them the plainest warning in his word and ordinances, and brings it home to their consciences by his Spirit. Though they stifle convictions, their consciences accuse them, and forewarn them of their danger. But should they slight these admonitions and reproofs, they shall know hereafter. Christ's plain dealing with Judas is recorded as a warning to all professors, and places the danger of hypocrisy and apostacy in the most conspicuous light. To declining churches the Lord says, Go to Shiloh. To insincere and hard-hearted professors, he virtually says, Go to Judas.

2. On this occasion Christ displayed singular love and affection to his disciples. He was about to suffer. The prospect of his death was a heavy trial to them. What he said to Judas removed a signal stumbling-block out of their way. It could scarcely have failed to have offended them and others, that an apostle, so long in his company, and eyewitness of his mighty

deeds, had no higher esteem of him, than sell him to his greatest enemies. It was almost enough to have shaken them and others to the centre. But when Christ could, and actually did foretell that it would be so, his prediction was mightily calculated to prevent the bad effects. The disciples were forewarned in the prophecies of the Old Testament that it would happen. There it is said, "Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." The sixth Psalm foretells, in the most glowing and affecting language, the character, and conduct, and doom of Judas. But the minds of the disciples were dark, and they did not understand the Scriptures. But when the traitor actually came with his band, the disciples would instantly recollect the kind warning which their Master gave them.

3. Jesus of Nazareth gave a satisfying proof that, though about to suffer, he was the true God, and the promised Messiah. That he should be betrayed, and especially by one of themselves, was an absolute secret to the disciples. When Christ told the wicked device of Judas, and he did not deny it, the prediction, and especially when fulfilled by the traitor, would prove a strong confirmation to the faith of the disciples, in the omniscience of Christ. If not rendered stupid through confusion, they could scarcely fail to argue thus: Whatever our Master may suffer, he knows the thoughts and intents of the heart. They had many former evidences of this; but through unbelief and vexation of spirit they were unable in

the very time to make a proper improvement of them. After his resurrection matters assumed a different aspect. Then from this and other instances, they were abundantly satisfied that he was the searcher of the hearts, and trier of the reins of the children of men; and that all things were naked and open to his eyes.

Satisfied that their Master was omniscient, they could not hesitate about the justness and propriety of his claims to Messiahship. Divinity and humanity were foretold as what were essential to his character, and would be united in his person. These extremes never met in another. A further acquaintance with the Scriptures would convince them that the true Messiah was to suffer and be cut off, though not for himself. When their hearts were opened to understand the Lord's word more fully, they had not the least reason to doubt that their Master was the true Messiah. He exactly answered to the prophecies, and corresponded to the types; and his works proclaimed him to be God. Justly was he called Emmanuel—God in our nature.

4. He gave full proof and indubitable evidence that his sufferings were voluntary. Every man, possessed of a moderate share of wisdom, if he knew that his enemies had formed a malicious design against his life, would prevent the execution of it, if he could. He would either try to render their plot abortive, or make his escape. At other times, when his enemies sought to slay him, Christ went away, assigning as his reason that his hour was not yet

come. His hour was now come, and he did not shrink. Instead of endeavouring to defeat the design of his enemies, he said to the traitor, "What thou doest do quickly;" and to his disciples, "As the Father gave me commandment even so I do: Arise, let us go hence:" and he went out and met the cursed band. How glorious does the Redeemer appear that night! Instead of shifting, he prepared himself for the bloody scene. He preached that precious discourse, John xiv., &c. to comfort and solace his disciples; and sent up that prayer, chap. xvii. that their hope and trust might be in God. He abrogated the passover, and instituted the Supper. The one was celebrated for the last time by him and his disciples, and the other for the first. He did all this with the greatest composure. When the traitor actually came, instead of attempting to make his escape, he said, "I have told you that I am he, if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." Often did he assert that his sufferings were voluntary. He said, "I lay down my life for the sheep." And again, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." If his sufferings had not been voluntary, they could neither have been acceptable to his Father, satisfactory to Divine justice, nor meritorious of eternal life. But of his own will he laid his life down; and when his gracious purpose was accomplished he took it again.

5. He gave full proof that it is vain for his enemies to indulge the least thought that they can conceal their sin from him. The thickest cloak the hypocrite can put on is too thin to hide the heart from those eyes which are as a flame of fire. Well could Judas deceive the disciples. They suspected themselves. They did not entertain the least suspicion of him. But he could not deceive Christ. The Redeemer could well say with him to whom he had imparted a prophetic spirit, "Went not mine heart with thee" in every stage of thine atrocious crime? All who profess to believe that there is a God, affect to believe that he is omniscient; but how superficial are the impressions produced on their minds by this consideration. They are neither deterred from sin, nor allured to duty. As God now knows the secrets of all hearts, sooner or later he will give certain evidence that there is not a thought, "but he knoweth it altogether." The cxxxixth Psalm deserves the serious consideration both of Christ's friends and enemies. There David speaks in a very affecting manner respecting the omniscience of God. Could the hypocrite or other sinners act in the manner they do, if they were impressed with the omniscience of the Redeemer? An habitual impression that God is witness to, and well acquainted with, every thought that passes in the heart, would be calculated to produce the happiest effects. But what shall we say? Christ told Judas that he knew the device of his heart; and Judas, though well warned, waxed worse and worse; and betrayed him. The devil firmly

believes that God knows all his thoughts; and though he trembles, his malice is unrelenting, and his assiduity in sinning is unremitting! Though he knows that God sees him every moment, he never, for the shortest space, desists from sinning—no, not though his chains hourly put him in mind that he will be called to an account, and receive everlasting punishment! Sinners are of their father the devil. Possessed of the same image, and actuated by the same spirit, they do his works. Ah sin, what a thing art thou! Will neither the inspecting eye of Jehovah, nor his mighty arm lifted up in his threatenings, nor hell fire, and chains of darkness, stop thy mad career, and deter thee from rushing on the thick bosses of God's buckler? Will nothing stop thy rapid torrent or change thy wandering course? Nothing—but the grace and love of that Redeemer whom Judas betrayed.

6. On this occasion the Redeemer exercised and displayed infinite patience. We can never enough admire his long-suffering in allowing such a perfidious wretch and monster of iniquity to sit at the table with him and his disciples, and warn him with such mildness of his treacherous design. To think that the Saviour, within a few hours of his condemnation and being crucified in the room of sinners, should allow the traitor to sit and eat with him at a sacred feast, fills the heart with astonishment! But such is his patience that we have similar wonders every day. Christ has now died. He is set forth a

propitiation in his blood. All his merit is made over to sinners in the Gospel. Though invited and urged to receive him, sinners *always* reject, and *often* betray him. In this aggravated conduct, Christ is as really present with them as he was with Judas. As the God in whom they live, he supports them in the very act of refusing him. How shall we account for such long-suffering and patience? While the whole creation could give no satisfying answer to this question, the Redeemer himself has done it in the following words, "I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, for I am GOD and not *man*, the Holy One in the midst of thee. For I am the Lord, I change not; *therefore* ye the sons of JACOB are not consumed." Indeed the conduct of hypocrites and other sinners would soon exhaust *any* patience, but that which is DIVINE. It too has a period. The Lord will neither bear, nor strive always with his enemies, and when his long-suffering is exhausted and comes to an end, his wrath will *begin* to burn! And when will this burning come to an END!

Having already, as you will recollect, applied this subject at considerable length, we shall only subjoin a very few sentences.

What has been offered from this text shows us that we are in great danger of deception. Whether Judas deceived himself or not, he deceived such as knew him. To be deceived in matters of eternal moment is awful beyond expression. We should compare ourselves frequently and habitually with the Lord's

word. The law and the testimony are the true criterion. There we have the character and conversation of the saints. If we have an account of their failures, their repentance is also recorded. The genuine operations of the new man are marked with infinite wisdom and propriety. They are written for our learning. We should search the Scriptures, and compare our hearts and lives with them.

Aiming at searching ourselves with the strictest scrutiny, we should put the work into God's hand. He has promised to work all our works in and for us. With David the saints have often employed him to search their hearts, saying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." God cannot be deceived, and he will not deceive us. Above all, we should close with Christ by faith. Doing this at first is the radical cure of hypocrisy, and the renewed actings of faith prevent its increase, and gradually banish it from the heart.

I persuade myself you would not wish to come to Judas's end. Beware of his beginning. Consider all the steps which led him on, and avoid them. Enter not into the way of the wicked. Their way goes down to the chambers of death, and leads to hell beneath.

You who have communicated for the first time should not be strangers to your own hearts. You have been already warned, that if professors are

hypocritical at their entry, and give not Christ their hearts, it is an hundred to one if ever they do it. Remember Judas. I know you were in some measure diligent before communicating. Continue. There could not be a worse sign than if you slackened your diligence after it. You should *all* consider. I have spoken to your ears. God alone can speak to your hearts; and to his grace and mercy I commend you.

SERMON XI.

MALACHI III. 17.

And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.

THE Lord has always had a special people distinguished from the rest of the world, and he considers them as his peculiar treasure. They seldom have any thing about them to catch the attention, or raise the admiration of the men of the world; but there is something in their maxims and practice which, though unjustly, provokes their contempt and malevolence. While despised by the men of the world, they are dear in God's esteem. He loved them with an everlasting love, and he loves them to the end. He loves both in *word* and *deed*. So great is his love that words cannot be found to express it. It passes all knowledge, and has a breadth and length, a depth and height, which are incomprehensible. To declare his love, the Lord uses names expressive of the most tender and endearing affection, and heaps them upon one another. He calls them spouse, friends, children, brethren, and peculiar treasure. He loves also in *deed*. He performs many actions to and for his people, which evidence that his love is

equal, if not superior, to his declarations of it. He chose them from all eternity, and Christ was established their surety. At an early period he revealed his purpose of love in his word, and opened up the great plan of salvation. In effectual calling he reveals his Son in their hearts. From that day till they are brought home to glory, he keeps them every moment, and without intermission performs some actions expressive of the greatness and reality of his love. Hereafter he leads them eternally to living fountains of water.

As the Lord loves in word and deed, we have a specimen of both in the text. Believers are *styled* his jewels, and he *makes them up*. He brings them into such a condition as will, some time or other, make it evident to whom they belong. The Lord not *only* loves the persons of his people, but their *exercises*. He makes honourable mention of these in the context: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." The exercises of the saints are said to be "an odour of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God," and to come up before him as the most fragrant perfume.

In this chapter, when the Lord took such notice of his people and their exercises, it was a time of prevailing wickedness, as may be seen, verses 13, 14: but through grace a few were enabled to keep their garments clean. While these were despised by all around them, they were highly esteemed by the Lord.

He cared for them as his jewels, and made them up. They did not serve him for nought.

Perhaps the text might have a primary respect to the Lord's care of the small remnant of the Jews who did not reject Christ, but believed on him as the true Messiah, and received his Gospel. If so, it may be considered as a promise of embodying them, together with the Gentile converts, into the New Testament church; but it must not be confined to this sense. It is a glorious promise, equally respecting all, in every age and country, who fear the Lord and think on his name, and has a special respect to those who bear testimony for him, when the greater part are running on in sin. The worse the times are, the dearer to the Lord in one sense are the few who are properly exercised: "and they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."

What will be further necessary for explaining these words will occur in discussing the following method. We shall first speak of believers as jewels; secondly, of the Lord's making them up; and then of the day in which he does it; and conclude with some practical improvement.

I. It was proposed to speak of the saints under the idea of the Lord's jewels.

1. Jewels are digged from the earth. The most precious metals, and the richest jewels, lie hid in the bosom of the earth. Without inquiring why it has been so ordered in Providence, suffice it to say, that

the thing is certain. Accordingly we are called, in Prov. ii. 4, to search for wisdom as for silver, where there is an evident allusion to searching for a silver mine.

The Lord finds all his people in the *rough quarry of nature*, and out of it he digs them. He finds them in a fearful pit and a miry clay. He brings them out, sets their feet on a rock, and establishes their goings. This is implied in the exhortation which the Lord gives to them "that follow after righteousness and seek him:" he calls them to "look unto the rock whence they are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence they are digged."

The saints are no better by nature than others. They all bear the image of the earthy Adam, and however soon they may be turned to the Lord, still "that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual." In their natural state there is no good thing about them. Their minds bear the impress of fallen Adam. They are prone to all evil, and averse to every thing which is good. Their hearts cleave to the dust, are set on things below, and go out in pursuit of every object, except such as is heavenly and spiritual. They live without God and without Christ in the world. Their whole nature is corrupted, and without original righteousness. Every faculty of the soul is depraved. The understanding is darkness, and the will enmity: the affections are impure and irregular, and the conscience is evil and seared. "Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is only evil continually." Such is the state of the soul of every saint while he

lies in the quarry of nature. Even the bodies of believers are taken from the earth, and are dust; and they are, in respect of them as well as their souls, on a level with the rest of mankind, for "all are of the dust." Thus, as the Lord's jewels come into the world, there is no difference between them and others. "They are heirs of hell, and children of wrath even as others."

2. Jewels are *polished*. After men have digged them from the bosom of the earth, they are commonly at great pains in polishing them. Every art is used to cut and form them to the owner's mind. The Lord too polishes his jewels, and gradually takes away the ruggedness which is about them in their natural state, and smooths them for his own use. He files off every excrescence, and takes away all superfluity of naughtiness. He makes them all polished shafts for sanctuary building. This operation extends to all the parts of the man, and is of equal extent with the depravity of their nature. Holiness is implanted in their hearts, and pervades every faculty of the soul. Light is sown in the understanding, and the will is renewed: the affections are purified and set on things above, and the conscience is awakened and invigorated. There is a total and universal change. The strong man is cast out, and the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart. Grace may be small when first implanted, but it is under Divine care, and will increase. Holiness extends also to all the members of the body, and they become servants of righteousness. Sometimes it costs the artist long time and much labour before his jewel is completely polished;

but he is always coming nearer the desired end. We can only have very faint ideas of the great work which the Lord has to accomplish in polishing his jewels; the pains he must be at, and the obstacles which must be surmounted, arising partly from themselves, and partly from their enemies. Any other, but the Creator of the ends of the earth, would faint and be weary; but having begun a good work He will perfect it. One thing is comforting, the more labour that is requisite for polishing the jewel, the more brightly will it shine, and the greater honour will it reflect upon the great artist. "Christ will be admired in all them that believe."

The Lord intends all his jewels to be pillars in his temple above, and lively stones in his spiritual house. This makes him neither spare cost or pains in smoothing and fitting them for their particular position. They may with propriety be compared to the precious stones in Solomon's temple, all of which were hewed, carved, and "made ready before they were brought thither, so that there was neither hammer nor ax, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building." The Lord's jewels in the article of death, and before they are placed in the temple above, are perfectly polished.

3. Jewels are kept safely. When once the owners have polished them, they lay them up carefully in some safe place. The Lord's jewels are kept safely. They are in the Father's hand, and none can pluck them out of it. The apostle strongly asserts their safety when he affirms that they are kept as in a garrison by the mighty power of God. The eternal God

is their refuge, and underneath them are the everlasting arms. God is their dwelling-place; and all his perfections unite for their safety and preservation. Infinite love moves him to keep them safely, and his wisdom directs him how to do it: his goodness and grace have made him declare that he will keep them, and his power enables him to do as he has said; and he will faithfully perform his promise. He says to them all as to Abraham, "Fear not, I am thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward: I am God almighty, walk before me and be thou perfect." They are all "set as a seal upon his heart and his arm." It must be difficult to pluck a seal from the loving heart, or the all-powerful arm of omnipotent Jehovah. Never has the power of God been more remarkably displayed than in the preservation of his Church. He is a wall of fire about her, and the glory in the midst. A well-built wall of sufficient height and strength is a great defence to the city which it surrounds, makes it impregnable, and keeps the enemy without. But a *wall of fire*, while it enlightens, and defends those who are within, consumes all who approach it, and renders every attempt to break through it certain death, and inevitable destruction. In this manner is Zion defended, and the gates of hell can never prevail against her. In the language of our text, before a great personage can be robbed of his jewels, which he highly values, many walls and gates must be broke through: before Christ can be robbed of his, which he purchased with his blood, all the Divine perfections must be encountered and overcome. That Christ may make his jewels absolutely secure, he

keeps them himself and entrusts no other with them : hear his own words, “ A vineyard of red wine, I the Lord do keep it : I will water it every moment : lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” And every individual saint may be thus addressed, “ The Lord is thy keeper ; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil ; he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore.”

4. Jewels in general are kept in a secret place, and not exposed to the sight of all indifferently. They are only brought forth upon some particular occasions, and in certain companies. In many respects may the Lord’s jewels be said to be kept secret. Their great value and dignity are hid from the men of the world, who reckon them only the offscouring of all things. The saints dwell alone, and are not reckoned among the nations. The life of grace and its real value are not fully understood by believers themselves ; and far less are they acquainted with the just value and excellency of the life of glory. With infinite propriety does John say, “ Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear 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.” The Lord’s people are hid and secreted from the bustle of the world, and like their great Master, neither cry nor make a noise in the streets. Often the believer lives in the mud-walled cottage, and is covered with tattered rags. The wealthy and gay

consider him as an object of pity, and his habitation as almost a nuisance. It does not now appear to them what he is. Little are they aware that he is one of Christ's jewels: but when he shall exchange his cottage for a crown, and his coarse clothing for the robes of glory, and shine as the sun, his true dignity will be known to all. The secrecy of believers is expressed in many passages of Scripture. They are called God's hidden ones, Psa. lxxxiii. 4. The apostle, Eph. i. 13, says that they are sealed of that Holy Spirit of promise; and a seal is used both for secrecy and safety. In Colos. iii. 3, their life is said to be hid with Christ in God.

While the new man, which is the chief part of the jewel, is the inner man, and greatly secret; the exercises of the Lord's people which are so pleasing to him, are many of them secret and invisible to the men of the world, and the great spring of all their exercises, love to the Redeemer, is what they can form no idea of. As to *time*, like Jacob, in many of their exercises, they wrestle "till the dawning of the day," or, like David, they rise at midnight. Most of their sorrowings, as well as their songs, are in the night. They regularly enter into their closets, and shut their doors behind them. The best of all their exercises are actings of the soul, and language is only the dress in which they are clothed. When they engage in private or social duties, they guard against ostentation, and are in some measure mindful that they are sinful dust and ashes. True, they make, and glory in making, a public profession of Christ, and are not ashamed of him; but little are the men

of the world acquainted with their secret groanings. In one word, the saints, while in this world, are like a bright gem wrapped up in a coarse covering, or overspread with some rust, the true value of which is not seen. In heaven, like gems highly polished and properly placed, they will so reflect the rays of the sun as to dazzle the beholding eye with their brilliant splendour!

5. Jewels are highly esteemed. Men commonly put more value upon them than all other things which they possess; and, unless reduced to the last extremity, will by no means part with them. Christ values his jewels in the highest degree. This seems to be chiefly meant in the text. The term translated jewels is *SEGULLAH*, a word well known to the learned, but the force of which can scarcely be conveyed to an English reader. The same word is used, *Exod. xix. 5*, where it is translated “*a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine.*” It is also used and translated in the same manner, *Psal. cxxxv. 4*, “*The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.*” A man is enriched by his treasure; and though the Lord in one sense cannot be so, yet he reckons himself more enriched by his people than all the world besides. Believers are his jewels, while the rest are only lumber. He expresses that particular pleasure and complacency in his people, which men find in their treasure. As a man’s treasure enables him to make a figure in the world; the Lord is peculiarly honoured by his saints. They not only glorify him themselves, but by their good works procure a revenue of glory

from others. They are his witnesses, and a city set upon an hill. The church is the pillar which exhibits truth that others may learn and receive it. They express too in their lives the wonderful power of his grace, which is admired by angels and fellow-saints. As a man cannot live and be happy without his treasure, neither can Christ without his jewels. Accordingly he says, "because I live ye shall live also;" and it is a part of his continued intercessory prayer, "I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." Christ's heart is where his treasure is, he is always with them, and never leaves them.

The Scripture is filled with expressions of the esteem which Christ has for his people. In Isa. xliii. 3, 4, he expresses himself thus: "I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life." In Jer. xii. 7, he calls his people "his heritage, and the dearly beloved of his soul:" and in Zech. ii. 3, he speaks of them as the apple of his eye, and declares that whoever touches them, touches him in that feeling part.

There is a near relation subsisting between Christ and his people expressive of the highest esteem: often he is spoken of as their Father, and has the most fatherly pity: sometimes he compares his affection to the tender feelings of a mother: thus he says, Isa. lxvi. 12, 13, "Then shall ye suck, ye shall be

borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." He is expressly called their Friend, Husband, and a Brother born for adversity. When all these tender relations meet in one person, his affection must be strong and inconceivable. Christ speaks with remarkable complacency about the relation between him and his people; and dwells upon it with peculiar delight. Thus in Song viii. 12, he says, "*My* vineyard which is *mine* is before *me*." He never says in all the Scripture, *my* world, to express his delight in it; but he always speaks about his people in the language of appropriation, and says, My treasure, my vineyard, my people, my sheep, and my jewels.

6. Jewels shine, and have a peculiar brightness and lustre. They differ in beauty and lustre from the common pebble. This is eminently true of Christ's jewels, to whom it is said, Isaiah lx. 1, 2, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee," and whom Christ addresses, Matth. v. 16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven;" and they are called in express terms "The light of the world." Believers have an *external* polish through the robe of righteousness, by which they are guiltless in the eye of justice and the law. This is the bright robe of salva-

tion, the glorious wedding garment which makes them shine conspicuously at the marriage supper of the King's son. In allusion to the proverb, this robe at once defends from all the storms of Divine wrath, clears all their debt, and is security against every future claim. Though originally lying in the dung-hill, it entitles them to a seat with the princes of God's people. It is a robe of finer contexture, brighter colour, and superior excellence, than that which covers the angels. It is perfect in its nature, subject to no pollution or decay, infinitely adapted to the person who wears it, and makes him the admiration of every beholder. Besides, Christ's jewels are "all glorious *within*, they are brought unto the king in raiment of needle-work." This is the inward holiness of the saints which pervades their hearts and lives. Cultivating it, they aim at walking worthy of their vocation, and having their conversation in heaven. They walk in the Spirit, and as Christ walked. It is true, that while in this world they have some spots; but they shine compared with the lumber of the world, and with what they were themselves before the Lord began to polish them. It is their happiness that they are sensible of these spots; and they make daily application to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. One spot is washed away after another, till at last "they are found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless," or, in the language of Jude, "presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy," and "shine as stars in their Father's kingdom." Then the lustre and brightness of believers will exceed the

sun in his meridian glory! and Christ will even so polish their bodies as to make them shine, “for that which is sown in dishonour will be raised in glory”—“and the Saviour shall change their vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” What a sight will the believer then be! Comparing himself with what he was in the quarry of nature, he will eternally cry out, O to grace how great a debtor! But, even in this world, the lustre of Christ’s jewels is remarkable, and, as it were, constrains the wonder of the Redeemer himself, who is represented in Song vi. 10, crying out, “Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners!” If the men of the world were not blind to true worth, and enemies to holiness, they would also admire the lustre of the saints. As matters stand, it often carries a ray of conviction into their hearts, and if it has no greater influence, it makes them desire to die the death of the righteous.

May not the believer, when he thus shines, be allowed to indulge a self-applauding thought? Boasting is excluded by the law of faith. That question, “Who maketh thee to differ, and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” at once produces gratitude and humility. Besides, they are clothed with humility, which constitutes a distinguishing part of their lustre. It is owing to their being polished by Christ that they shine; and they are comely *only* through his comeliness put upon them.

7. Jewels are rare. They are not to be found in every house. They are costly, and few possess

them; and in general are only in the cabinets of the great. A real Christian is a rarity indeed! The jewels in our text are truly few, and only to be found in Christ's cabinet. What a small part of the world are Christians in name, and how few of these are Christians indeed! About being in Christ we may adopt the apostle's words, and say, "If any man be in Christ," which evidently implies that it is a rare thing; but, blessed be the Lord, it is a reality, and we hope some here can say with the same apostle, "I knew a man in Christ." When the Lord Jesus tabernacled in the flesh, he went about and proclaimed the news of salvation to his own, and no man received his testimony. This made him when he met with Nathanael cry out, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!" The Scripture is most explicit about the purity of believers. In the days of Isaiah and Jeremiah they were so few as to be men wondered at. Christ, who knew every heart, and needed none to testify what was in man, expressly spake of them on many occasions as few in number. These are his words, (Matt. vii. 13, 14.) "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." And often he said, "Many are called, but few chosen." The general rule about real Christians is, there is one out of a large city, and two from a numerous tribe or family. Sad experience proves the truth of Scripture asser-

tion, that though Sion's assemblies be crowded, only this and that man is born in her.

While there is a similarity between jewels and the saints about being few in number, there is an obvious difference about the place where they are generally to be found. While jewels are in great houses, the believer commonly occupies the mean cottage. Christ was reckoned not enough qualified to be a guest at the tables of chief priests and rulers; and seldom was invited; he was entertained in general by the poor, and lodged with the fishermen of Galilee. His personal reception in Judea was an emblem of what his Gospel and grace would meet with ever after: thus justly says the apostle, 1 Cor. i. 26—29, “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.”

8. Jewels and gems are set in crowns. The best polished are prepared with the utmost care, that they may sparkle in the king's crown on his coronation day. In the language of metaphor, Christ's crown is entirely made of gems and jewels. Every believer, when polished by the Redeemer, with the utmost cordiality and cheerfulness presents and dedicates himself, soul and body, to him, to be a shining jewel

in his mediatorial crown. He casts the crown of his salvation at his feet. Often the Scriptures ascribe the coronation of Christ to his Father, as in Heb. ii. 9, where the apostle applies part of the eighth psalm to Christ, and says, "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." Christ himself often speaks of his Father appointing to him a crown and kingdom. It is what we might naturally expect, and is not to be wondered at, that the Father should crown his only Son, and honorary servant, who glorified him on earth: but is it not surprising that the coronation of Christ should be ascribed to the Church, and that she should have the honour of such dignified employ? In the figurative language of the Song, king Solomon is exhibited as a glorious object deserving attention and faith, wearing "the crown with which his *mother* crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart, and the daughters of Zion are called to go forth and behold him." The same glorious work is ascribed to every believer in Isa. lxii. 3, where the prophet addresses him thus, "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God." Never did the church engage in work in which she had more complacency and delight. With all the heart the believer gave himself to Christ here, and with the same affection and without reserve will he eternally cast upon him the crown of his salvation, ascribing to him all the praise, and giving him the undivided glory. The mouths of the saints will then be filled with eternal ascriptions

of praise, “singing with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature ascribes blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. They sing a new song, saying, Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests.” Rev. v. 9.

Believers, instead of ascribing the least share of the glory of their salvation to themselves, reject the thought with indignation, and render it all to Christ. But if they had any inclination for dignity, they have the highest possible honour in being eternally set as a jewel in the Mediator’s crown. *There* they have the most conspicuous place for honouring him, and *there* they appear to the greatest advantage themselves. If now eminently, then every saint may say, “*I am a wonder to many!*”

Before proceeding further we shall make a reflection or two from what has been said.

1. This subject, like every other belonging to the doctrine of grace, tends to exalt the Saviour, and humble the sinner. When Christ meets with his people, they are no better than others. They lie in the same mass, and are exposed to the same wrath. He thought on them in their low estate. He laid down his life in their behalf. He is at much pains to gain their hearts. Having gained them, he does much to preserve them. He forms his image in their souls.

He preserves and increases it. He will be admired in them at last; but this will be the effect of constant assiduity and unceasing care. His people should be thankful for his kindness, and try to express their love to the praise of his grace.

2. Sinners should consider what they are, and what they might be. In their natural state, they are guilty and deformed; but no worse than others, who will shine as stars in the kingdom of their Father; and they have the same means. They might be better. Christ invites them. There is nothing between them and heaven, but their own consent. If this is refused, it will increase and aggravate their condemnation. Sinners are in a sad enough condition in their natural state; but if at last they are found Gospel-despisers, their guilt, pollution, and misery will be awfully increased. Yet there is room. Christ is as able to save as ever, and he is as willing. His arms of mercy are stretched out still.

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry should be clearly documented and supported by appropriate evidence. This includes receipts, invoices, and other relevant documents that can be used to verify the accuracy of the records.

The second part of the document outlines the procedures for handling disputes and resolving conflicts. It states that all parties involved in a transaction should be treated fairly and equitably. Any disagreements should be resolved through open communication and negotiation, rather than through litigation or other legal means.

The third part of the document provides a detailed overview of the company's financial policies and procedures. This includes information about budgeting, forecasting, and reporting. It also discusses the company's approach to risk management and how it ensures the long-term sustainability of its operations.

The fourth part of the document describes the company's commitment to ethical business practices and social responsibility. It outlines the various ways in which the company seeks to contribute to the community and the environment, and how it ensures that all business activities are conducted in a transparent and ethical manner.

Finally, the document concludes with a summary of the key points discussed and a statement of the company's vision for the future. It expresses the company's confidence in its ability to continue to grow and succeed, and its commitment to providing high-quality products and services to its customers.

SERMON XII.

MALACHI III. 17.

And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.

THE most accurate accounts, and frequently repeated, would leave the man who was born blind without proper conceptions of many of the works of nature, and the various transactions taking place around him. The opening of his eyes would give him new ideas, information of another kind, and make amazing discoveries. Should the sinner hear ever so much about the mystery and power of grace, he can form no proper conception of them. Faith introduces him into a new world, and discovers the most amazing events. The eye of faith sees a land of light to be a great theatre where the most wonderful scene is exhibited. It sees all mankind lying in the rough quarry of nature, and Jehovah taking out one here and one there, to fit them for his spiritual temple. It perceives all events designed to promote the great work of redemption in its different branches. In a land of light the eye of faith beholds Jesus spiritually present, and going about doing good, as he did in his human nature in the land of Judea. By faith the believer perceives that there has been a secret un-

seen hand watching over, and preserving him when in the pit where there is no water. He is now satisfied that it is a small thing to be approved of men, but of the last importance to be approved of God. Let the world despise and depreciate him, the approbation of the Lord infinitely overbalances such abuse, and fills his heart with consolation. He not only discovers present objects formerly unobserved, but he looks within the vail, and his faith realizes unseen things. He now believes that there is an important day coming, when all, without exception, must appear at the Divine tribunal, and receive according to their works, whether they have done good or evil. Struck with the amazing happiness of the Lord's people, and inconceivable misery of his enemies; it is the one thing which he desires—to find mercy of the Lord in the day of the Lord. That day will set all to rights. Faith discovers that God has that day ultimately in his eye in all his procedure to his people, and makes the saint keep it in his eye in all his exercises. That his jewels may shine that day, and appear worthy of him, is the chief reason of many dispensations which appear very trying to sense and the carnal eye; but faith, discovering the grand design, submits with satisfaction to the hottest furnace. God says,—They shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels: faith listens, believes, fills the heart with joy unspeakable, and cries out, If I only be his that day, let him now do what seemeth him good,—for I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in all his saints.

Having already spoken of believers under the idea of jewels, we proceed, as was proposed, to

II. Inquire how they are made up.

1. The Lord makes up his jewels by means of his word and ordinances. His ultimate end in these is his own glory; but this is chiefly promoted by gathering in sinners, and polishing them for himself. Where he has not that work to accomplish, he does not send the means. Where there is no vision the people perish. Every ordinance is a mean appointed by Christ for polishing his jewels. The word is the great mean of convincing men of their miserable situation, and their need of Christ. By the law is the knowledge of sin. The Gospel points out the remedy, and by the promises sinners are begotten to a lively hope, and made partakers of a divine nature. It is the great instrument of beginning and promoting the spiritual life. The word, too, is the great mean of sanctification. This seems evident from Christ's prayer, John xvii. 17, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth," and from what he says elsewhere, "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." It sets before us in the clearest manner the necessity of holiness, and assures us that without it no man shall see the Lord. It discovers the only method by which it can be attained, namely, through the blood of sprinkling efficaciously applied to our hearts. It enjoins holiness, and opens up the most encouraging and powerful motives. It sets before us examples of holiness for our imitation,

especially Christ himself, the great pattern, in whose steps we ought to walk.

These things are only a part of Christ's work when he makes up his jewels, and the word is the great mean. Whatever is done by it may partly be ascribed to ordinances, the chief design of which is to open up the word, and bring it home to the heart, that it may have its proper effect. However the Lord may bless the reading of his word for making up his jewels, there is a special blessing annexed to the preaching of it; and he has promised to be in all places where his name is recorded, and bless them. The great ordinance of the supper, when blessed by the Master of the feast, adds peculiar polish to his jewels. In a very affecting manner it puts the believer in mind of the situation in which Christ found him, and the wonderful method of his deliverance by the death of the Redeemer. Suitably improved, it seals his interest in the covenant of grace, and is a sure pledge of eternal glory. It awakens in the heart of the worthy communicant all these gracious workings, by which the Lord polishes and makes his jewels up. His heart is filled with humility, and flows out in gratitude. Self-emptied, he glories only in the Lord. Impressed with his own vileness, he applies to the Head of sanctifying influences. Filled with wonder at what has been done for him, he determines to devote and dedicate himself wholly to the Lord.

2. Christ makes up his jewels by his Spirit. The best means would never prove efficacious of themselves. They would neither hew a jewel from the quarry, or give him the least polish. The letter

kills; the Spirit alone makes alive. Without supernatural influence, the best means would only prove hardening. The Holy Spirit must begin the work in a day of power, and carry it on gradually. He is both the author and preserver of the spiritual life. By new communications from him the Christian grows, and has cubits added to his spiritual stature. The saints could never make themselves in the least degree better in any duty, or under the highest privileges, without his influences. He works in them both to will and to do, both in the beginning and progress of sanctification. The influences of the Spirit are variously described in Scripture, to point out their universal effects upon the hearts of the saints. He convinces and quickens, sanctifies and strengthens, and comforts and seals. To perform the operations necessary for polishing believers, he dwells in their hearts, and abides with them for ever. The personal inhabitation of the Spirit in every saint, though a great mystery, is a great reality. *How* it is, none can tell; but the weakest babe in Christ feels it in his comfortable experience.

3. He makes them up by his providential dispensations. Redemption, which is the great work of Providence, in all its parts is a making up the Lord's jewels. If we consider the Church at large, the whole plan of Providence is subservient to her interest, and every dispensation shall eventually promote the holiness and salvation of individual saints. The kingdom of providence is committed to Christ for the benefit of his Church: hear his own words after he rose from the dead, Matt. xxviii. 18, "All

power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." The greatest revolutions in nations, and the smallest events, even to the falling of a sparrow, are equally the fruit of his sovereign purpose, the immediate work of his hand; and overruled by his all-powerful direction for the interest of his people. Often he employs agents for the accomplishment of his purposes which they never thought of, and which, could they have discovered them, they would have laboured to prevent. He has all hearts in his hand, and the whole universe under his irresistible control. He sits in heaven, and does whatsoever pleaseth him. The united efforts of the great and wise cannot obstruct, for a single moment, the least event which he hath determined. Nay, without their knowledge, and contrary to their design, they are active agents to perform his pleasure.

Providence often appears dark, and the eye of faith can scarcely discover any thing but apparent ruin and devastation to the Church. God's way is in the sea, and in the great waters: but he will make darkness light, and crooked things straight. Till faith can discover the propriety of his procedure, it rests on his word, and trusts him even when he seems to slay. The darkest dispensations are equally designed by Jehovah for the benefit of Zion, as the most smiling. Wise men may make some things answer a few purposes; but the Lord Jesus is possessed of that wisdom which makes *all things answer all things*. Were a child admitted to an artist's shop, and saw him filing a jewel, or applying rough instruments, he would be ready to apprehend that its lustre, instead of being

brightened, would be sullied and defaced. Similar conclusions are often drawn by weak saints, when adverse dispensations are measured out to Zion or themselves. The event will discover that the Lord adopted the method which in *his* wisdom was best fitted to polish both. The hottest persecutions have proved seasons of special revival. They have been at once a seed-time and a harvest. Numbers have been gathered home to the Church above, and multitudes added to Zion below. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. What persecution is to her, the hottest trials are to individual members. They rub off the rust, exercise their graces, and brighten them. Time will discover, that though the outward man perished, the inward man was renewed day by day.

4. He makes them up by afflictions. These might have been comprehended under the dispensations of Providence; but as they are eminently useful for polishing the Lord's jewels, we give them a separate place. Trials seem as necessary for the Christian in this life, as wind or water for the mill. Some graces would rust and languish without them; and others would scarcely find the least occasion for action. Faith is an instance of the first, and patience of the last. Owing to a remaining selfishness and love of ease, the saints are slow of heart to believe the necessity and utility of sufferings and tribulations.

Afflictions are a happy and profitable mean in the Lord's hand of making the saints both useful and ornamental. In the fire their graces so shine that they enlighten and encourage the believing beholders.

The advantage of afflictions is asserted, Heb. xii. 10, 11, "Our heavenly Father chastens for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby." Afflictions wean the saints from the world, and purge away their sin. In this chapter they are called the Lord's furnace, where he refines and purifies his silver. The benefit of afflictions is conformable to the experience of believers in all ages. They have reflected upon their severest trials with pleasure, and dwelt upon them with gratitude and praise. We shall only mention the testimony of one, who had ample experience on this subject: "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in great faithfulness hast afflicted me. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word. It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." All the saints will at last have reason to say, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." They wean the heart from creature-dependance. They make the saints more humble, submissive, and teachable. They are powerful medicines, which, in the hand of the great Physician, cure their immoderate attachment to worldly enjoyments, and their spiritual languors and decays, and promote the health and happiness of their souls.

The saints have trials of another kind, and more excruciating than their bodily afflictions,—when they

fall before the power of temptation, and their bones are broken by the prevalence of sin. These are their worst and heaviest trials; but such is the wisdom and mercy of their gracious Lord, that he overrules even these for their spiritual advantage, and makes them useful for polishing his jewels. After Peter had denied his Master, and wept bitterly, he was cured of what was hurtful in his forwardness and zeal; and had all that was useful in them greatly increased. He was equally inflamed with love to his Master, and active in his cause; but he was more humble and self-diffident. David's penitential Psalm proves how much, through the Lord's grace, he was polished after his fall. The gracious heart abhors to improve such instances for the indulgence and extenuation of sin; and with indignation rejects the thought of sinning because grace abounds. The advantage reaped by the saints after their falls, while useful and encouraging to themselves, will be infinitely for the glory of Divine wisdom and grace.

III. The *third* and *last* thing in the text, is to speak of the day in which the Lord makes us his jewels.

1. He makes them up in the day of regeneration. They were chosen in Christ from eternity. The Lord had thoughts of love and mercy towards them from everlasting, and firmly purposed their complete salvation. Before the day of regeneration they lay in their blood, without any distinguishing difference from the rest of the world. In that day all their iniquities were done away, and a principle of life and

grace implanted. The Lord, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, shines into their hearts; and all the objects which they saw before, appear now in a very different and new light. Important objects, formerly unknown, are now discovered, and occupy their minds. The eye of faith is opened, and they look at the things within the veil. They are born again, and as really introduced into a new world as the new-born babe. Old things are passed away, and all things become new. They experience desires which they never felt before. This is the day when the Lord's purpose of grace has the first actual influence and saving effect upon them, and in which he begins to make them up.

2. He makes them up in the day of gradual sanctification. This day from regeneration is of equal length with their natural lives; and through the whole of it he is gradually meetening them for being pillars in his temple above. Every thing that passes over them is overruled for promoting the work of grace, and day by day the Lord enables them to "put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Now they lay aside one lust, then another: now they flourish in this grace, then in that; and every day they die unto sin and live unto righteousness. Regeneration is the beginning of our sanctification; that is the growth and progress of the new birth; and glory is the perfection of both. Though the saint may appear to decline, when recovered, his declensions will issue in the advancement of his holiness and sanctification.

3. He makes them up at death. Then in a particular manner the Lord makes up his jewels. Then the soul of the believer is fully delivered from every thing sinful, noxious, or unholy; and is made perfect in every thing that is valuable and excellent. The gracious dispositions implanted and promoted in this life, are brought to the highest pitch of perfection and beauty. Then they are perfectly conformed to him, who is infinitely holy in himself, and the source of all that holiness which is to be found among the creatures. At death God takes the soul to himself. As a great man, when all the operations about polishing his jewels are over, lays them safely up in his cabinet; so at death God takes the better part of the believer to himself, and *houses* it up in glory. Then it is beyond the reach of sin, Satan, and every enemy. Introduced into the temple above, it shall no more go out. There, there is “no more curse, no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain.” At death, too, the Lord makes up the *body*. It is lodged in the place where the weary are at rest, beyond the reach of all sufferings and pain, and is no longer pinched by any of its former wants. It is consigned to the dust, in union to the person of Christ, and as a part of his purchase; and the members for ever cease to be the instruments of sin. It is deposited in the grave in sure and certain hopes of a blessed resurrection, and till that momentous period is ever under the watchful eye of the great Head. Thus, *both the parts* are disposed of, and the jewel made up by the Lord; as you have long been taught, “The souls of believers are, at their death, made perfect in holiness,

and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection.”

4. Once more, the Lord makes up his jewels at the final judgment. Then the soul, already happy in the enjoyment of the God of grace, will receive additional happiness, when the body, her former partner, shall jointly share in her celestial bliss. Soul and body will be reunited never more to part, and will enjoy ineffable felicity to all eternity. The resurrection of the body is an article of our creed, to which the believer gives his cordial assent. The glorious manner in which it will be accomplished, is beyond our conception. We have a lofty description of it in 1 Cor. xv. 52—54, “For the trumpet shall sound, and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality; so when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

To qualify the body for inconceivable and endless happiness, it will undergo a wonderful change. It will be raised spiritual and incorruptible, and will neither be liable to suffering, nor tend to dissolution. According to our present ideas, it will resemble a spirit more than a body. As it will increase the sufferings of the souls of the wicked, already consigned to everlasting punishment, to be again reunited to their bodies, and the whole man sent to

hell; a reunion will increase the happiness of the redeemed. The souls and bodies of the ungodly shudder at the thought of meeting. With wrathful and jealous eye they look on each other in the odious and infamous light of a seducer, tempter, informer, and tormentor, which has exposed each the other to endless ignominy and misery beyond all conception. The very thought of suffering together, and undergoing joint punishment, aggravates their torment, and adds fuel to the fire. They would almost rather associate with the old Serpent than with one another. The very sight of each other reminds them of their former opportunities, and the cause of their present irremediable situation. Opposite beyond expression is the case of the redeemed. Their souls and bodies look with wishful and longing eye the one for the other. In this world they mutually shared in sorrow and consolation. They joined together in divine service, and excited and assisted one another. Here they had a sympathetic feeling under all outward fightings and inward fears. They jointly fought in the great warfare, and opposed all their foes. To all eternity they shall jointly enjoy the palm of victory, and reward of grace. Then they shall be so framed as to be no hinderances the one to the other, for the spirit will always be willing, and the flesh never weak. Like old friends long separated, and brought together in the happiest circumstances, a recollection of all their former scenes, in which each bore his share, and acted his part, will be remembered with unutterable satisfaction, and be the ground-work of unceasing pleasure.

This is the day chiefly meant in the text, when Jehovah says about his jewels, "*they shall be mine.*" As to real interest or propriety, they will be no more his than in the day of regeneration; but his propriety in them will be better known. When he says, They shall be mine, the meaning is, he would then give the most indubitable evidence that they were his peculiar treasure,—he would own and confess them before an assembled world. Accordingly you have been taught that "at the resurrection, believers, being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity."

When Malachi wrote, it was a time of prevailing wickedness. They that feared the Lord were few and despised; they had trials of cruel mockings, and were exposed to all the severity of persecution. They were treated as the offscouring of all things; but, says Jehovah, they shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels. As if he had said, In the day of the Church's *trial* they shall be set as a seal on mine heart and arm; in the day of her *partial* deliverance, I will so care for them as to make it evident to themselves that they are mine; and in the day of her *complete* deliverance, all the world shall know that they are my jewels. Now they are heirs in minority; then they shall be put in full possession of the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. Now they are princes in disguise; then their royal dignity will be conspicuous and illustrious in the highest degree. In one word, in that day, that solemn and important day, they shall be the jewels of

Jehovah, the admiration of angels, the envy of devils, and the glory of the universe!!!

It remains now to apply the subject; and we infer that,

1. There is a great difference between saints and sinners. This is evident from the names ascribed to them expressive of their natures. The one are called sheep, and the other goats: they have the titles of godly and ungodly, holy and unholy, and righteous and wicked. Here the saints are called God's jewels, or God's choice goods; while sinners are but lumber. These different names and situations are accompanied with corresponding privileges and danger. Great are the privileges of the saints who are Christ's and interested in all spiritual blessings: while the sinner is in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity.

2. This difference should appear in the lives of believers. If they are sheep, they should be gentle and patient; they should be docile, hear the shepherd's voice, and follow him. If they are godly, their conversation should be in heaven, and whether they eat or drink, they should do all to the glory of God. If they are favourites of heaven, they should be transformed from this world in the renewing of their mind; and where their treasure is, there should their hearts be. If they are expectants of glory, their souls should not be drenched in earthly objects; but "being risen with Christ, they should seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right-hand of God." If jewels, they should shine, and "be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the

midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom they shine, as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.”

3. However great that difference be in itself, or however discernible through the power of Divine grace, it may be in the lives of believers, they have no reason for pride or self-gloriation. Christ found them lying among the pots, and the foulest of the foul. “ Their father was an Amorite, and their mother was an Hittite: none eye pitied them or had compassion upon them: they were cast out in the open field to the loathing of their persons, and when Christ passed by, and saw them in their blood, he said, Live.” He beautified them as the dove whose wings are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. Nay more, they were not only in this dreadful situation when Christ found and delivered them, but every degree of grace and holiness, every proper thought and action, are owing to a continued influx of reasonable supply from his fulness. The saint can no more in his own strength preserve or increase grace, than he could procure or implant it. Sensible of this, he glories only in the Lord.

4. The love of Christ is truly amazing. He loved his people from all eternity. In the fulness of time he took upon him their nature, and died to purchase his jewels. They are costly articles to him indeed, for they “ are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.” He endured the wrath of God, and the severest sufferings, that his jewels might be brought from the hole of the pit, and exquisitely polished. In

all that he did, he had no motive to excite him, but BECAUSE HE LOVED US." There was much to prevent and obstruct his benevolent undertaking; but he surmounted every obstacle, that he might be able to say with propriety, "They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels."

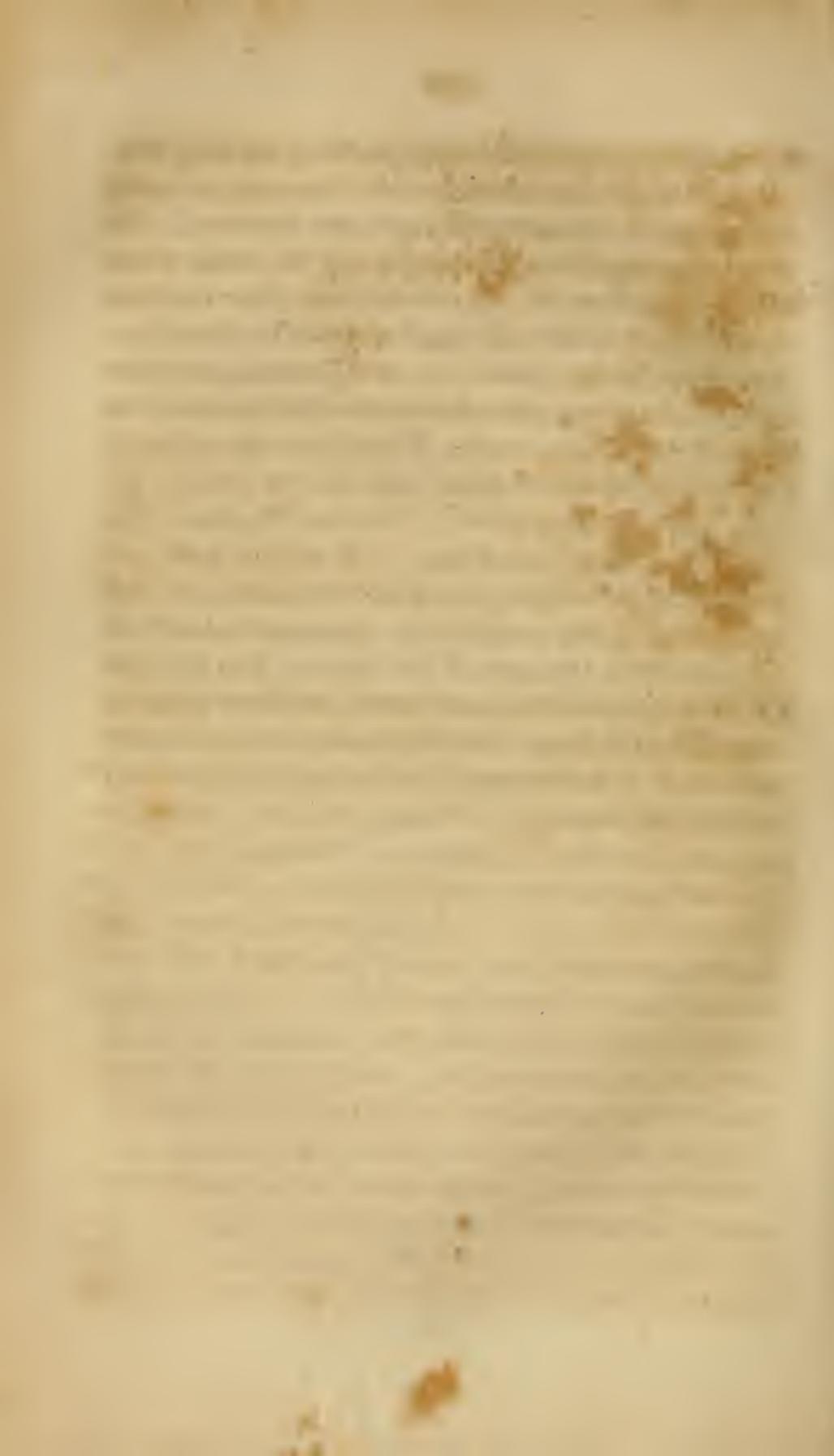
5. Believers have the highest reason to love Christ. Love should beget love. We should love him who first and thus loved us. We love him too little at the best, and the love of many waxes cold. Every mean of grace should be improved to inflame our love, and especially the great ordinance of the supper immediately to be dispensed. At his table the Lord signally makes up his jewels, and his people should go forward to it with gratitude and love. Their hearts should be filled with earnest desires that, at his table, they may be polished for future service, in a new and higher degree while continued in this world, and for death when he shall call them hence. It is highly probable that this may be the last opportunity to some of commemorating the dying love of the Redeemer in this solemn ordinance. We would need to rise from his table, in some measure, armed with the same spirit with which Christ rose from the first celebration of the supper,—he rose, went out, and met death. Whether you may live longer or shorter, at his table you should seek a powerful intimation from himself, that you shall be his in the day when he makes up his jewels. This would cheer and animate your hearts under every affliction, and fortify your minds against all desponding fears. It would deliver you from an undue love of life, and prepare

you to meet the king of terrors unappalled. You should have some evidences and good hope that you are his jewels before you take your seat at his table. Look within. Survey your lives. Collect your evidences. Look upwards. Cry for the Spirit to breathe upon these slain that they may live. Seek him to bear witness with your spirits that you are the jewels of the Lord. Have you already got some polish? Apply for more. Pray that you may be sealed, and kept safely and secretly till that day when the Lord makes up his jewels.

6. The saints may well be resigned under the sharpest afflictions. The design of these is to polish and make them up. The hotter the furnace, the more admirable a sight is the saint while in it, and the more beautiful an object when brought out. Tried saints are a pleasing sight to angels. They behold them with pleasure and wonder. They learn from them the manifold wisdom of God, and the astonishing power of his grace, which is invincible indeed! If saints themselves know not now what God is doing, they shall know hereafter.

7. We shall only further infer, that sinners are God's lumber. If a man apprehend that any valuable article has fallen by among his lumber, he tosses it about, if perhaps that valuable article might be found: and when sure that there is nothing valuable among it, he gives up all future care about it, and reckons it rather cumbersome than advantageous; and if he is about to move to another place, he commonly commits it to the flames.

God tosses about his lumber seeking out his jewels. Nations undergo revolutions, that Zion may be saved, and termed "sought out, and not forsaken." He overturns, overturns, overturns, till he come whose right it is. Families are moved from place to place, that certain individuals in them may be brought to the Gospel and saved. In every tossing a secret unerring hand casts the lumber to such a place that the jewels may be found. When these are all made up, the vast mass of lumber will be cast into the fire that cannot be quenched. Sinners, be wise. You have now the best privileges. "If you are wise, you are wise for yourselves; but if ye scorn, ye alone shall bear it." If you continue to misimprove, God will cast you, with the rest of his lumber, into hell fire. Oh that you were wise, and would lay these things to heart, that the Lord's language concerning you also may be, "And they shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels!"



SERMON XIII.

MALACHI III. 10.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

THIS chapter begins with an illustrious prophecy concerning Christ. His incarnation is foretold; and his glorious character as Messenger of the new covenant is delineated as ground of faith and consolation to the Church. His gracious work of refining his Church, and all her members, is also predicted. In the language of the Old Testament, believers are priests and Levites, and these he refines. His work extends to his enemies, and he is a swift witness against them. When he comes to his Church as a Refiner, the dross which cannot stand the furnace will be consumed; and the true gold brightened.

This chapter also contains the sad state of the Jewish Church. Various charges are brought against her. The precepts of both tables of God's law are broken: there is a departing from God's ordinances in a continued progression: they were guilty of rob-

bing God: they were obstinate, and refused to take with the charge, and instead of performing the duties enjoined, said, Wherein shall we return, and wherein have we robbed God? This prophet not only describes what the church then was, but foretells what she would be at other periods. Therefore, at any time, when these or such sins prevail, a gracious Lord speaks to Zion in the words of the text, Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

This text viewed in its connexion contains these things:

A judgment from God, viz. great outward scarcity bordering on famine. This was produced partly by the season, and chiefly by the caterpillar and canker-worm devouring the fruits of the ground. This judgment was God's voice, and proclaimed that he was angry. It was a loud language to the people. By it God punished them for the sins specified; accordingly in ver. 9 it is said, Ye are cursed with a curse, even this whole nation.

It contains the procuring cause of this judgment,—they robbed God of the tithes. They learned in experience that keeping back God's part did not enrich them. Withholding more than is meet, especially from God, tendeth to poverty. On the other hand, if we honour the Lord with our substance, our barns shall be filled with plenty, and our presses burst with new wine. In opposition to this conduct,

the Jews still kept back God's part. They grudged it, and thought that what he got was lost to themselves.

In the text too there is the way to get matters bettered, and the judgment removed; God's curse taken away, and his blessing restored.—Bring ye all the tithes into my house. These were God's property, and were chiefly designed for two purposes,—that the priests and Levites might be maintained, and the poor supplied. The Levites had no portion in the division of Canaan. The Lord was their portion. They attended daily at the altar, and God appointed that they should live by it. The poor were also to be supplied. The tithes for these uses were to be separated, and carried up to Jerusalem, particularly every third year, and the owners, along with the Levites, and the poor, were to eat. Thus it is said, Deut. xiv. 28, 29, “At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates. And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.” See also chap. xii. 5, 6, 7, 11, 12,—they were to pay them *all*, and withhold none. They were to do this before the plenty should be enjoyed, as a proof that they could trust God, and believe his word before they saw the accomplishment, as the way in which they were to expect plenty, and as giving a decided preference to God's house.

In fine, the text contains the encouragement. God calls them to prove and try him about the blessing. This without doubt amounts to a promise. The path of duty is pointed out, and the success graciously secured. While there is great encouragement in God's promise, this is heightened by the abundance of the blessing,—“that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” Perhaps the words in the original imply, that God could give no more, as well as they receive no more; and may very naturally be explained, that God will give a perpetual, everlasting, and most abundant blessing. As God expressed his kindness to the Old Testament Church in blessings of a more visible nature, this had a primary respect to great abundance of corn, wine, and oil; his blessing on the land that flowed with milk and honey. So much did these outward things depend on his blessing, that Zion sung, “He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs.”

Such is the literal and primary sense. But matters of vastly more importance are included. That the mere paying of tithes was not all is evident, because the Old Testament dispensation was near an end; or rather the prophecy respected the period after Christ's incarnation. Besides, tithes might, and often were, punctually paid, and God, instead of being pleased, greatly offended. He says, Psal. l. 8, “I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or thy burnt-offerings.” Much depends on the *manner* of performing duty, and the *end*. “Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High.”

As the Old Testament dispensation was typical, and a shadow of good things; we must drop the shadow, and attend to the substance. In New Testament language, bringing all the tithes signifies having respect to all God's precepts, aiming at the performance of every duty, and especially prizing and supporting the Gospel and its ordinances. By the blessing of plenty is meant the corn that makes the young men cheerful, and that new wine which exhilarates the maids.

It is universally agreed that the devourer in the following verse signifies a great spiritual enemy; deliverance from him, a great spiritual blessing; and that the fruits of the ground are to be taken in a spiritual sense. This verse also, under figurative language, sets before us great spiritual blessings. If we could only see, we would find it a bright cloud with the sound of abundance of rain. If we could attain to the spiritual exercise here pointed out, the blessing would certainly become matter of experience and enjoyment. In fine, if one person attain this exercise, though ten thousand should neglect it, the blessing will be his. Faithful is he that hath promised, and God has not said to any, Seek me in vain.

We shall endeavour in explaining these words.

I. To open up the import of the text.

II. Show what it is to bring all the tithes into God's house.

III. Illustrate the exercise of proving God.

IV. Speak of God's opening the windows of heaven and pouring out the blessing.

I. It is first proposed to take notice of some truths implied in the text.

In this, and many other passages of Scripture, Zion is called God's house. He says, That there may be meat *in mine house*. It is so called in allusion to the temple. There is much propriety in this designation. God has founded it. It is the place of his peculiar residence, and he says, Here will I dwell. In Zion he converses with his people, as the Father of the family. There he is worshipped, and communicates mercy; there he receives petitions, and bestows his grace. It is an emblem of the Church above, and the entrance to it; and the same term is applied to both. Christ says of heaven, In my Father's house are many mansions.

1. This text implies that this house is supported by the activity of the *Head* and the *members*. If either of these be deficient, there is a great want. If the members fail, the tithes are wanting; and if, through provocation, the Head fail, the blessing is withheld. In every period, the Church has been supported by the activity of both. The members have supported her by their activity and the performance of duty; and the Head by powerful efficacy and the blessing. It is impossible to mention what both of these have done, and still do.

The members love and attend. They love the habitation of God's house, and prefer a day in his

courts to a thousand. They wait at the posts of wisdom's doors, listen to Christ's voice, and sit at his feet and learn. Hearing Christ's voice is an eminent way in which they support the spiritual house. They pour out their hearts before him. They wrestle for his interest and their own, which are inseparably connected; and will have no denial. They present the calves of their lips, and enter his courts to praise him. They support and maintain his ordinances. They are set for the defence of his Gospel. In Ezekiel's language, they love and support the forms, fashions, and laws, of his house. They devote themselves and their all to him. To maintain this house, they count not even their lives dear, and by his grace are determined to resist whatever would hurt or destroy it even unto blood. To all these things they are constrained by the love of Christ.

The Head does all in respect of efficacy. He laid the foundation deep in his own purpose and blood. The whole edifice is built upon him as the foundation laid in Zion by his Father. By his almighty grace he brings all the stones from the rough quarry of nature, and makes them lively stones by union to himself. He lays and supports them. Conversion and through-bearing are signal parts of the support of this house; and both are from him. He instituted every ordinance, and appointed every office. His grace and providence are hourly employed about this house. He waters it with his grace every moment; and all power in heaven and earth is given to him for supporting and bringing it to perfection. "The Lord of hosts shall come down to fight for Mount Zion, and

for the hill thereof. As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it, and passing over he will preserve it." Whatever the members do, in the way of duty, is by his appointment; and his blessing alone makes it successful. All the efficacy and grace and Providence is immediately from himself.

2. It implies that the great Master of this house takes particular notice of the conduct of all who profess to belong to it. This and other passages in this chapter are expressive of the narrowest notice. He observes when they pay the tithes, and when they neglect. He observes even the principle from which they act, and whether they give cheerfully or with a grudge. There are two characters of Christ expressive of the closest notice. He is called a refiner, and distinguishes between the gold and the dross. He is a witness. He is present at every action, and carefully scrutinizes it.

He distinguishes between the true and nominal professor. Where the person is not accepted, every action and service is rejected. He curses the deceiver. None can enter into this house and deceive him. He observes all the workings of the unbelieving heart, and takes particular notice how often it refuses him, and how inimical it is to his grace. About nominal professors he particularly notices, what they *do not* to support his house, and what they *actually do* to undermine and destroy it. Though they may forget the instances of neglect and opposition, he registers them all; and will call them over at the last day. To one he will say, I was an hungered,

and you gave me no meat; and to another, I was sick and in prison, and you did not minister unto me.

He observes also the real friends. Should any, however vile and unworthy, cast but an eye to this house, he sees him yet afar off, like the prodigal when he thought of returning to his father's house, or the publican, when he could scarcely lift up his eyes, or Jonah when he cried from the belly of hell. With respect to the real friends, he carefully notices what they *actually do*, for his house, and what they *desire* to do; how many are converted in their desire, and how many enemies are brought down. He observes their sad lamentations for what they cannot do. He knows when it is in their heart to build a house, and when they lament after the Lord. He takes notice of all their complaints about what retards them; and their secret groanings are not hid from him. He is well acquainted with their love to the lower house, and longing for the higher. He notices every part of their outward substance which is given to support his members and interest, even to a cup of cold water. Every groan and every grace are carefully observed, and shall not lose a reward. He cannot but notice these, as they all come from himself; for out of his fulness we receive, and grace for grace.

3. It implies that God has appointed a certain order and connexion between the services of his people and the blessing. This text evidently supposes an established and settled connexion. When the tithes were regularly brought into God's house, the blessing was granted; and when withheld, the

curse followed. This order is mentioned in verse 7, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you." It is by no means an order of merit. How can the cries of a beggar be thought meritorious? Faith, or any other grace, which is the fruit of God's favour, can never have the least influence to merit it. It is a connexion of order by God's appointment, and ensures success. His great encouraging rule is, "Seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you;" or in the language of this text, "Prove me, if I will not pour you out a blessing." This method has the happiest effects. It crowns God's institutions with honour, and the aims and endeavours of the worshippers with success. It is peculiarly mortifying to sin. It keeps the saint always near the throne of grace, and gives a double relish to the blessing. Were God to follow any other order, it would indulge men in unbelief and sloth.

4. That in the right performance of duty God has great pleasure, and his people great profit.

The tithes are meat in God's house. As the priests under the law did eat of the tithes offered by the people, so the great High Priest is represented as relishing the spiritual services of the saints. The spouse speaks of laying up fruit for her beloved, and he accepts the meat-offerings and the drink-offerings of his people. In duties, rightly performed, Christ and believers are represented as supping with one another, and their intimacy and familiarity resemble John's, when he leaned on Christ's bosom. Besides, when the tithes are brought into God's house, he pours out the blessing, and as mercy is his darling

attribute, there is nothing in which he more delights. The more he is importuned, he gives the more, and with greater complacency. The Scriptures every where speak of that delight and pleasure which God has in the services of his people. They are called an offering of sweet savour. The respect he had to Abel's sacrifice is expressive of the complacency he has in every sacrifice performed in faith. His complacency is variously expressed in Scripture. A broken spirit is a pleasing sacrifice to God, and he has pleasure in those who betake themselves to his mercy. He says to all his people, The companions hearken to thy voice, cause me to hear it. When the fearers of his name speak together, he writes a book of remembrance; and he puts their tears in his bottle. Instead of forgetting their labours of love, they shall be mentioned at the last day, as evidences of his satisfaction and their love.

Believers have *great profit*. Duty is the way in which God bestows the blessing, and of all things the blessing is the most advantageous. Being made sharers of it, the fulness of the new covenant becomes theirs. They are interested in Christ, the unspeakable gift of God, and with him God freely gives all things. All their wants are supplied. The promises will be faithfully accomplished. Then he will be their God, and they shall be his people. He will give grace and glory, and withhold no good thing. In the language of this text, the curse and all its baneful effects will be removed. Besides, if there is unspeakable advantage in *receiving* the blessing, there is no

small benefit in *seeking* it. Wrestling for it exercises and increases grace, prepares the soul for receiving it, and enhances its value when bestowed.

5. It also implies that nothing can be more prejudicial to the spiritual interest of Church members than to be scanty in the service of God. Of this many passages are a ready proof. Here they kept back the tithes, and had famine instead of plenty, and a curse, and not a blessing. In the prophecy of Haggai we are told that their own houses were ceiled, strong, warm, and elegant; while the Lord's house was in ruin. On this account the seed was in the barn while it might have been in the blade. They sowed much, but reaped little; and the Lord did blow on the little which they brought home. The heaven over them was stayed from dew, and the earth from her fruit. God's blessing, *as set before us in his promises*, may be compared to the fat kine and years of plenty; and *our scanty services* to the lean kine and years of famine which devoured them. In general it will be found true respecting religious duties, that he who soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly. To very many are these words applicable, "Ye receive not because ye ask not; and hitherto ye have asked nothing." Some cannot find time for the evening and morning sacrifices; and others find not an heart. The same may be said concerning hearing and reading the Lord's word, self-examination, and many other duties. The attainments of many are small, compared with what they might and should be; and this provokes God to send leanness to their souls. There

are a number of spiritual sluggards whose gardens are filled with weeds. The hand of the diligent alone maketh rich.

There are two rules about our conduct in God's service. The one is, According to your faith be it unto you, and faith will never grudge time or endeavour. The other is, With the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured unto you again. If we satisfy ourselves with scanty measure in our application to God, how can we expect any thing but scanty returns? But in our religious duties, if we have good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, we may expect gracious returns in the same proportion. By this we do not design to limit the Lord's sovereignty, or the riches of his grace, or to make our conduct the measure of his; but only to point out the usual way in which believers may expect large supplies of grace. When we ask frequently and fervently, his grace alone inclines and enables us: and as we serve him only with his own, so in bestowing more grace, and answering our cries, he only crowns that which he has already given and drawn into exercise.

6. It implies that God will not disregard the diligent conscientious performance of duty, but will crown it with success. All the tithes brought into the storehouse below, will open the windows of heaven above, and draw down the blessing. This text would be unmeaning on any other supposition. In all time past a single instance cannot be adduced, where God has been inattentive to the fervent cries of his people. All the saints stand as a cloud of witnesses

in proof of the contrary. As long as Abraham prayed for Sodom he was heard; and when Israel's cause seemed most desperate, Moses interceded successfully. Every saint has said with David, Psal. xxxiv. 6, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles:" or with Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9, "I besought the Lord thrice;" and if God did not grant the blessing that was sought, he compensated the want by saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

As God has crowned the conscientious performance of duty in all time past, we may be sure he will do it in every future period. If God should at any time neglect the prayers and services of his people, it would be attended with the worst effects: besides the failure of his promise, it would lead us into an endless labyrinth, for if he were not to be found in the way of duty, we could never know where to find him.

The afflicted believer objects, and says, this bears hard upon me: if the Lord always listens to the cries of true believers, I fear I am not one of them: I have prayed much, and sought him fervently; I have waited long at the throne of grace for a blessing which I greatly need; but he has been silent to my prayer, I am near to halt, and my cry is, How long, O Lord!

We would answer, are you certain that God has not heard you? If you have not got the very blessing which you prayed for, has he not bestowed some others? Has he not strengthened you with strength in the inner man? Wait on him who waits to be

gracious. If the vision tarry, wait for it; and at evening time it will be light. However long God may seem to be silent, the dejected saint ought to wait on him, laying down this as an infallible conclusion, Heaven and earth may pass away, but God's word shall be fulfilled.

In the last place, it implies that a promising God delights to be put to his word and proved by it. He says, Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse and *prove* me. A faithless person cannot endure to be proved by his word; but nothing is more acceptable to him who has faithfulness for the girdle of his loins, than when his people prove him by faith, wrestling that he would do as he has said. Jacob proved God, and put his word to the trial when his angry brother came against him. He applied to him as the God of his fathers Abraham and Isaac, and put him in mind of the injunction to return to his own country and kindred, and the promise that he would deal well with him. He acknowledged his unworthiness, but insisted for deliverance, because God said, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea which cannot be numbered. Moses also proved God about the great promise of bringing Israel into Canaan. Often Israel rebelled against God and provoked him. He threatened to destroy them; but Moses said, What will become of thy promise? He urged every argument for the accomplishment; and God was as good as his word. David too proved him about giving him the kingdom. This promise often seemed to fail, but after a variety of striking events was punctually fulfilled. Though

sometimes David was about to stagger, in general he proved God, and rested on the word he had spoken in his holiness. All the saints prove God, saying, Remember the word upon which thou hast caused us to hope. The straits to which Jacob and David were reduced are a proper emblem of the inward fightings of the Lord's people in the Christian warfare. The opposing rage of Esau and Saul fall far short of the malicious cruelty, and destructive cunning of the great adversary who goes about seeking whom he may devour. Through his temptations and the power of unbelief the saints are often reduced to their wits' end. Nothing then remains but to look again to God's holy temple, and prove his promise. This exercise is best understood by the believer when all refuge fails, and only the bare word of promise remains as ground of hope. In this situation, when the saint grasps the promise, and proves the Divine veracity, he eminently glorifies the Divine perfections, especially that power which can accomplish the word and surmount every difficulty, and that faithfulness which actually will do it.

II. We proceed to show what it is to bring all the tithes into God's house.

1. In order to this we must *be there* ourselves. As far as possible it was the duty of Israel to bring the tithes, and not send them. The spiritual services meant by the tithes, like the widow's mites, derive their value not so much from the quantity, as the person, and the manner in which he performs them.

Personal attendance upon God's ordinances, whether public or private, is a great duty, which should not be neglected when God gives opportunity. The temple below is an emblem, and in some respects the threshold of that above, where none will worship by proxy. We ought to present our bodies before God in his ordinances, for the honour of Christ the great Head, the encouragement of others, and our own spiritual benefit. In ordinances Christ is exhibited as the only Saviour and propitiation, and set forth crucified before us. He passes by as the great Physician of souls, and kindly says to every diseased sinner, as to the impotent man, "Wilt thou be made whole?" In these he makes over himself, and all the fulness of the covenant of grace.

A due personal attendance on God's ordinances has been regularly exemplified by his people in every age. Of old the children of Israel punctually went to Jerusalem: thither the tribes went up, Psal. cxxii. and no hardships either prevented them from setting out, or dispirited them in the way. Passing through the valley of Baca, they made it a well; they went from strength to strength, and every one of them appeared in Zion before God. They esteemed a day in his courts better than a thousand; and this supported them under every discouragement by the way. They found in experience that their own happiness consisted in yielding obedience to the Divine command. At the entry of the New Testament dispensation they continued daily in the temple; and in every age the Lord's people will be found to love the habitation of his house. A neglect or contempt

of ordinances is most dangerous. A curse is denounced against the man who turns away his foot from hearing the law. It must be remembered, however, that mere bodily attendance is not sufficient. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. He chiefly calls for the heart; and a dead carcass can never please him. Alas! professed worshippers are often like Ezekiel's hearers, who sat in God's house and heard his word, but their hearts went after their covetousness. While many satisfy themselves with a mere external attendance, others often absent themselves altogether. There will be excuses while in this earthly tabernacle, but they should be such as will satisfy conscience in the hour of death, and may be presented to the Judge.

2. It implies that we ought to devote a certain portion of our time to the Lord, without reckoning it lost. Many of the Israelites who brought the tithes to Jerusalem were at a great distance, but whatever time was requisite, they were to allow it without grudging.

Our time is wholly the Lord's. It began by his appointment, will end at his pleasure, and ought to be spent in his service. We should have an eye to his glory in our natural and civil actions. We should join fervency in spirit with diligence in business, and whether we eat or drink, we ought to do all to his glory; but a certain proportion should be particularly devoted to him. He has expressly set apart some time for himself. While in infinite wisdom he has allowed us six days, he claims the seventh.

Reason cannot but assent to the propriety of the appointment. A much greater or lesser proportion would have been equally inexpedient. On the one hand, we are very ready to forget Divine things; and on the other, the concerns of this world require our attention while in it. While God has set apart the whole of the seventh day for himself, he claims also a portion of all the six. Under the law the morning and evening sacrifices were appointed, and punctually observed. The Gospel delivers from the letter, but by no means from the spirit. We are still to begin and end the day with the calves of our lips. The believing Israelites did not consider these sacrifices as any way exempting them, either from secret, or family duty. To encourage to the careful observance of them, God often signally countenanced them with some special manifestations of himself, instances of which we have in Job and Daniel.

Though expressly enjoined not to give God less, on particular occasions, we may and should give him more. Providential calls, our own situation, and that of others, will determine as to these occasional services. There are especially two things, which will tend to settle the quantity of time to be thus devoted to God. These are *love* and *necessity*, each of which has a powerful plea. Love dislikes to be stinted as to the time spent with the dearest friend; and necessity cannot think of going away without good time to present, urge, and plead in its own behalf. When one can say with David, I am poor and needy, or with Paul, the love of Christ constraineth me; he will not be greatly ignorant

about the time to be devoted to the Lord. The time immediately spent with God has precious effects. It consecrates the rest of the time, and tends to spiritualize the heart; and then the person is likely to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

We are not to reckon the time lost which is thus spent. There is no profit in robbing God. Even as to the things of this world, he may soon blast *them*, or lay his hand upon *us*. If we look to the other world, no time can be employed to such advantage as in seeking the pearl of great price, and laying up treasure in heaven.

3. It also implies that we should give him a part of our substance. This was directly and immediately meant by the tithes. Under the Gospel, the command to honour the Lord with our substance is as binding as ever, though we are neither confined to the same manner of giving, nor to the same quantity. As this duty is perhaps as little understood and practised as most, the following things may perhaps cast light upon it.

All that we have in this world is from the Lord. The silver and the gold are his. We are taught by Christ to seek our daily bread from him, and he carves out our lot. If we enjoy outward prosperity, it is wholly from him. "He blessed them also, so that they are multiplied greatly, and suffereth not their cattle to decrease." (Psal. cvii. 38.) The hairs of our head are numbered by him, and a sparrow falls not to the ground without him. The best concerted plans, and the strongest endeavours will be unsuccessful, without his blessing; and his watchful

Providence is equally necessary both for procuring, and preserving our outward enjoyments.

As we have our all from the Lord, we ought to expend none of it directly *against him* or to *support his enemies*, but to use it in subserviency to his glory, and our salvation. The contrary conduct is most sinful. It was a great ground of the Lord's controversy with his people, that they did not see his hand in the good things they enjoyed, and knew not that their corn, wine, and oil, which they prepared for Baal, came immediately from him. This provoked him to take away these outward blessings, Hosea ii. 8—13. The same conduct is also reprobated, James iv. 3, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

While we should use none of our substance against God, a part of it should be directly given *to him*. The calls of Providence, the situation of Christ's interest and members, and our own ability, will determine the quantity. Christ needs part of our substance to support his cause and ordinances, and to supply his members, who are on beds of languishing or in the straits of poverty. He has the strongest possible claim to what is necessary for these purposes. We are bound by justice and gratitude to give it. It is just that he should be served by his own; and gratitude requires that a part be given to him, from whom we have the whole. As to our ability, the great rule is, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. Every one is to give as God hath prospered him. Many are ready to err in judging of their own ability. If we would judge aright, we should judge without partiality, and

with faith on God as Jehovah-Jireh. The Lord loves a cheerful giver, and to remove all backwardness to this duty, he sets before us the most powerful encouragement in his word. What is given for these purposes is called a lending to the Lord, who will return it with interest; a casting our bread upon the waters, with an assurance of finding it; and he has promised that every service of this kind, even to a cup of cold water, shall be rewarded. We have often seen verified, Prov. xi. 24, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty."

4. It includes a performance of every duty. The duties enjoined are either more directly to God, ourselves, or others; and none of them are to be neglected. That we may *know* them, we are diligently to look into the law of the Lord, which is perfect, and the only rule of faith and manners: that we may *practise* them, we are diligently to apply to the grace of the Gospel. The law tells us *what* to do, and the Gospel *how* to do it. The one sets duty before us, and the other grace and strength for the performance. A person can never be said to bring all the tithes into God's house while he lives in the wilful neglect of any known duty.

5. Bringing all the tithes into God's house also includes an observation of every ordinance. The Lord hath appointed various ordinances, some for gathering in sinners, others for building up his own people, all of them for the good of the body and his own glory; and none of them should be slighted.

As these are well known, they need not be named. In the observation of them it is of great importance to have an eye to the Divine authority which enjoins them, and the ends for which they are appointed. Waiting upon God in them, we should be influenced by the hope and expectation of the blessing annexed ; and should consider them all as means of communion with the great Head, and designed to meeten us for the inheritance of the saints in light.

We shall only further say, that God considers keeping back the tithes as robbing himself. In any case robbery is a great sin, exposes to severe punishment, and must be aggravated in proportion to the excellency of the things taken away, and the bad effects produced. Keeping back the tithes robs God of his due, is pernicious to our own souls, and hurtful to others. As persons guilty of this crime when apprehended are punished, so God will not hold them guiltless who neglect to bring the tithes into his house. The Israelites here were punished, and such as act the same part have no reason to think that they shall escape. When the Lord's people themselves are in any measure guilty of this crime, though he pardon their sins, he will take vengeance on their inventions.

Leaving the other parts of this subject, we conclude at present by observing, that a professing people are often very guilty, and always highly favoured. It was so with the Jews. They had peculiar privileges. They were God's chosen people, and he constantly watched over them. He supplied all their necessities, and protected them against all their foes.

They were favoured with the means of grace, and enjoyed the symbols of Divine presence. Salvation was set before them. Justly did Christ say, "Salvation is of the Jews." But they were very guilty. Though they enjoyed privileges superior to every other nation, they did not improve them. Sin prevailed against light and warnings. They rejected the counsel of God contrary to conscience and conviction. They knew that the tithes should have been paid; but they withheld them. Before this, they had ample experience of the sad effects of God's anger; but they despised them. Others favoured with the Gospel too often follow the same course. The means of grace are a distinguished privilege. Suitably improved, they will produce the happiest effects. Misimproved, the event will be awful and melancholy. God has promised to be with us, while we are with him. If we forsake him, he will forsake us. We should endeavour to comply with the gracious call, "Return unto me," and take encouragement from the comforting promise, "and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts."

SERMON XIV.

MALACHI III. 10.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

THE blessing and all the intimations of it are from God. He contrived it in his purpose, and offers it in his promise. He wants to be importuned that he may bestow it. Fervency in seeking it is a part of the blessing, and the way to enjoy it fully. God has not only provided what we need, but complains when we do not seek it; and assures us that proving him is most acceptable, and an exercise which he has promised to bless. When any thing beneficial is withheld, it is with this view, that we may observe God's hand in keeping it back, and apply for it. Thus he says, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Having in a former discourse endeavoured to explain the two first heads of our method, we proceed as was proposed,

III. To illustrate the exercise of proving God.

There are two parts of religion remarkably experimental—the believer's proving himself, and proving God. These are totally beyond the ken of mere nominal professors, who satisfy themselves with the exteriors of religion; and they are by far too much heart-work to be a part of the hypocrite's cloak. Even careless believers are too little acquainted with them; but the exercised (though perhaps they cannot say much concerning their attainments) are frequently employed both in proving God and themselves. These two tend to cast light on each other, and from proving ourselves we may form some idea what it is to prove God. On this we offer the following observations.

1. To prove any object is to compare it with some touchstone. When we prove ourselves, we bring our hearts and lives to the touchstone of the law, and the characters and exercises of the Lord's people, as delineated in his word. When we prove God, we bring him and his conduct to some touchstone. Here the wicked err to their own destruction. They think God such an one as themselves, and make their own sinful lusts and inclinations the touchstone. Such was the conduct of the wicked Jews when they indulged sin, and expected preservation because the temple of the Lord was among them, Jer. vii. 4.

They made the temple, which should have been an eminent mean of holiness and humility, subservient to their pride. The carnal Jews brought God's Messiah to the touchstone of their ambition. They expected a mighty prince to deliver them from the Roman yoke, more galling to them than the yoke of sin, and when Christ appeared they were offended on account of his poverty and meanness.

The tried and exercised believer in proving God brings him to a touchstone different indeed, and which God himself approves, namely, Divine revelation. This alone is his ground of hope, and if God act agreeably to his word, his people can have no reason to complain. In proving God by his word, it is necessary that the saint know what it is, that he may ascertain if God, in his case, acts agreeably to it.

The saint proves God by the various parts of his word. The great design of the whole is to proclaim his *mercy* to sinners through Christ. Mercy is his darling attribute, and is over all his other works. In proving God the Christian considers with satisfaction the boundless nature of his mercy set before him in the Scriptures, the astonishing wonders it has done to procure egress to itself, and the amazing effects after it has actually vented through the Redeemer. He considers God's own account of himself, that he is love; that his thoughts of mercy are higher than our thoughts as the heavens are higher than the earth; that his mercy endureth for ever; and he cries with the Church, Micah vii. 18, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by

the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." Proving God by his mercy, the believer places his own misery beside it. Some humane persons need only an opportunity of doing good, and the sight of a miserable object draws out bowels of compassion. It is eminently so with God, therefore the saint says, as in Psal. xxv. 18, "Look upon mine affliction, and my pain, and forgive all my sins," or, as in Psal. xxxi. 9, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble; mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly."

In bringing God to the touchstone of his mercy, faith instead of being alarmed at his *justice*, rejoices in it as satisfied, and in the interest of the sinner, and makes it a part of the touchstone. The believer approves of the glorious substitution of Christ, and takes his standing on the sea of glass. He insists with God to deal with him as in Christ, in whom he is well pleased, and in whom there is no iniquity in Jacob. Discovering God in Christ, he sees him to be a JUST God and a SAVIOUR, and just in justifying the ungodly. He sees that justice has received such satisfaction that, instead of having any claim upon the sinner who believes on Christ, it must and will see all the purchased blessings bestowed.

As in the word itself, so in the exercise of proving God, the *promises* hold a distinguished place. Discovering the good in the promises, and the faithfulness of them, the saint embraces them with his whole heart. He considers his own wants, and brings them to the promise, insisting upon supply for them all.

Proving God consists greatly in insisting that he would do as he has said, and crying, Hast thou not said, and wilt thou not do? and I will not let thee go except thou bless me. Remote from every eye, the poor believer uses a freedom with God about his promises, which he could not use with any fellow-creature. He wrestles with him, pours out his heart before him, and gives him no rest. As his necessities daily recur, he applies to the promises, puts God in mind of them, and proves him about the accomplishment. When reduced to the greatest extremity, he doubles his diligence in prayer.

Were it not for Satan and unbelief, God's word would never be called in question; but as these call him a liar, he has taken every method for the confirmation of it. He has ratified his promises with an oath. This gives his people, when proving him, ground of strong consolation. They consider that an holy person, though weak, would do much rather than break his oath, and that the very sight and recollection of it, with every honest man, would awaken the highest endeavour to make him neither act short of it, nor contrary to it. Among men an oath is the highest security that can be given. If we believe them when they swear, much more may such a testimony emitted by God be depended upon. When he swears, well may every person believe. He swears for himself. He pledges 'as it were his godhead to make good what he has promised. Considering all this, believers exclaim, What will not an almighty, and infinitely holy God do rather than break his oath! He will not only open windows in

heaven that he may keep it; but heaven and earth shall pass away before he break it!

The believer also proves God by his *known* conduct, and what he has formerly done. He remembers the years of the right-hand of the Most High. For this, among other reasons, his wonderful works are recorded. He insists that God would do to him as he has done to others, and cries in the language of the prophet, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which dried the sea, the waters of the great deep, that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?" (Isaiah li. 9, 10.) He dwells upon the great interpositions of God in behalf of his people when they were in the utmost distress. These inform him what God can do and has done, encourage him as to what he may expect, and incite him to prove him in prayer. He urges that now, as formerly, in the mount of the Lord it may be seen. These great deliverances have been a most comforting touchstone to the saints in every age, and have been transmitted by them to succeeding generations, as an unfailing source of comfort in all their trials.

2. In proving God we bring in every circumstance which tends to make the trial decisive. This is well known among men. Proving one another about a matter of importance, every thing which appears to be of any weight is collected. Proving God about the blessing, the saints follow the same course. It is astonishing to hear the eloquence and fluency of

many poor persons when engaged in this exercise, who can scarcely open their mouths on any other subject. This is owing to the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit helping their infirmities, and to the ingenuity of faith, which is quick-sighted, full of invention, and scarcely lets any thing escape its notice which would be advantageous. An instance of this we have in the Syrophenician woman: when Christ was silent, instead of giving up her plea, she drew nearer, and urged it with more importunity. When he intimated that the children's meat should not be given to dogs, her faith discovered a plea even in this title—if the children were entitled to meat, the dogs had a right to the crumbs.

In proving God, the saints urge the free manner in which the promises were made. They plead that if God, without any solicitation, moved by nothing without himself, but only by his own grace and good will, made the promises; their guilt and pollution, which he well foresaw, can be no obstruction to their accomplishment.

They urge likewise Divine power. In proving a person about what he has said, his ability to accomplish is of great weight. They are persuaded that God is able to do as he has said, and that whatever their case be, nothing is too hard with him, who is almighty. God proved Abraham's faith when he called him to offer up Isaac, and he proved God's faithfulness and ability, when he bound his only son—the son of the promise, and was about to strike the fatal blow. Persuaded that God could raise him up

from the ashes, he staggered not. Daniel too had the strongest persuasion both of the grace and almighty power of God, when he chose rather to be cast into the den of lions than either omit the worship of the true God, or give it to any other; and God shut the mouths of the lions, and preserved Daniel. The three children, believing that their God was able to deliver, preferred the hottest furnace to the greatest worldly enjoyments at the expense of sinning against God. Trusting to Christ's ability, Peter walked on the water; and many a believer, since that day, has ventured on the boisterous element of arduous duty, and severe difficulty, with nothing to carry him out, but—God is able—it may be he will be gracious—and who knows but he will return. He has argued thus, “I am weak, but God is strong; he calls, and I shall try; many who have entered on great duty, with vast discouragements, have been supported, and it will glorify his grace to support me.”

It is impossible to name all that the saints adduce to add weight to their cause, when proving God. They urge the bad effects if they do not prevail—that enemies will reproach, friends hang down their heads, and the good ways of the Lord be evil spoken of. They insist on the good effects if God mercifully interpose: he will get a revenue of glory, they the benefit, and others great encouragement. But it is of the last importance to observe here, that, whatever they adduce to support their cause, and encourage their heart, when proving God, Christ is their

Alpha and Omega, the beginning, end, and amount of all their hope, and of every plea they urge at the throne of grace.

3. When proving is with a view to obtain something of which we stand in need, as it is always in this case, it consists in asking with importunity, and urging every possible argument that we may prevail. Proving God always includes an ardent desire that he may act like himself, and bestow the blessing. We cannot prove him without prayer. Some think it enough to sit still, and leave God to do or not do, give or not give, as he pleases. Not so the believer. He opens his heart wide in desire, and with his mouth cries to the Lord; and in this manner proves if he will pour out the blessing. God cannot be proved but as he is on a throne of grace. From the word of grace we have all our encouragement, and from the throne of grace every blessing.

The saints ask with great importunity. Not satisfied with faint wishes and languid desires, they cry with vehemency and fervency, and their souls follow hard after God. We well know what it is to prove a friend, or fellow-creature, if he will grant us some object we greatly need, or anxiously desire. Dissatisfied with barely asking it once, we make repeated application. Frequently and with importunity the Lord's people apply to him for salvation and deliverance from particular straits. Never did a man on the brink of destruction cry more vehemently for relief proving what others would do for him, than they with God for mercy.

While most importunate the believer urges his plea by every argument. To the praise of grace, he urges his petition for pardon both from the greatness of his sin, and the magnitude of divine mercy. The psalmist uses the former argument, Psal. xxv. 11, "O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great:" and the latter, Psal. li. 1, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." The boundless nature of Christ's merit, and the infinite efficacy of his blood to cleanse from all sin, are urged as the strongest arguments for justification and sanctification. To obtain the blessing, like the spouse, the saint urges the greatness of his desire, saying, I am sick of love; and like the psalmist, the greatness of his necessity, saying, "Bow down thine ear, O Lord: hear me, for I am poor and needy." Not to name many other arguments adapted to particular situations, the wrestling saint urges his plea from this consideration, that if he is pitied, God will get a revenue of glory, and heaven will resound with endless songs of praise.

4. Having proved God, we are to allow and rest in just evidence. Proving is always with a view to collect evidence, and come to some decision; and we should not in this case, more than in others, be ever learning without coming to the knowledge of the truth. When we have proved God by the touchstones already mentioned, and find satisfying evidence that he cannot be worse than his word (which faith will always do,) we are to consider the proof as made, the trial over—

rest in the evidence, and add it as a new and valuable increase to our experience. The great end of proving is to subdue unbelief, remove doubts, increase our faith, and encourage ourselves in the Lord.

Those who proved God, of whom we have an account in Scripture, nobly rested in the evidence which they obtained, that God was what he revealed himself to be, did as he said, and was never worse than his word. They put a mark on the decision for their own encouragement in all future straits, and for the consolation of tried believers in every succeeding age. Great was the benefit which accrued to them from resting in just evidence. On every future occasion they applied to God, as a God and friend whom they had proved and tried. When Abraham proved him, he rested in the evidence, as well he might, and put this motto on the place and interposition, JEHOVAH-JIREH. Owing to Jacob's success and satisfaction in proving God, he called the place *Bethel*, and *Peniel*: and both God and Jacob afterward appealed to the proof then made. Long after, God said, I am the God of Bethel; and Jacob not only allowed the title, but improved it and gloried in it. Once the Israelites, having proved God, called him *Jehovah Nissi*. At another time, when he had graciously healed them, they recorded his kindness, and called him *Jehovah Rophi*. David was favoured with signal interpositions. He remembered the proofs of God's power and goodness, and improved them in his future trials. His exercise on this head is often recorded. We have a beautiful instance, Psal. xlii. 6, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will

I remember from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." Every believer of any standing has been distressed with outward fightings, or inward fears. He has proved God, and met with gracious interpositions. These, with all the circumstances of time, place, and wrestling, he ought carefully to keep in mind for the glory of God, and his own benefit in future distress.

5. In proving God, we are to do duty, and leave the event to him. God will do as he has said. His word cannot be broken. He will hear the cries of his people; but their faith and patience may be greatly tried. He will interpose; but he must neither be limited as to time or manner. Our season for gracious interposition is commonly much earlier than God's; and the blessing seldom comes in the way in which it was expected. We are to commit our way to God, and prove him, trusting that, in his time and way, he will bring it to pass. Pursued by Pharaoh, the Israelites ventured into the Red Sea without *sensible* evidence of safety, and left the event with an almighty God. Returning to Jerusalem with his companions, though greatly afraid, Ezra was ashamed to seek an armed defence from a heathen prince to whom he had said so much about the power and kindness of the God of Israel. He determined to prove the Lord, and fasted at the river Ahava. Having attempted duty, he set forward, leaving the event to God. By God's good hand upon him he was preserved from his enemies, and such as lay in wait by the way, Ezra viii. 21, 22, &c. When Jerusalem was closely besieged by Rabshakeh, Hezekiah followed

the same course, and was not disappointed. The saints should always act in this manner, and often do it. The proof which they make of God when they pour out their hearts in faith, never disappoints, but always exceeds, the most sanguine expectation. Could we rely on the Divine veracity pledged in the promise, God would see to the accomplishment. It is his part to perform, and ours to believe.

6. This exercise includes a high valuation of the blessing concerning which we prove God, and a waiting on him for it. Unless we *value* the blessing, see the want of it to be misery, and are sensible that we can have it nowhere but from God; we will never heartily engage in this exercise. The Jews by this time might have learnt that their own endeavours could never give them plenty, remove want, or rebuke the devourer. Every spiritual blessing is from God alone. Experience will soon convince all who are in earnest that they can do nothing of themselves for their own salvation; and faith, which alone brings any person to prove God, discovers that with him only there is mercy.

Valuing the blessing, believers are to *wait* for it. Though they may apprehend the time long, they are to wait till God send mercy, as they that watch for the morning. The night may be long and stormy, and waiting very irksome; but the morning will come. Nothing is more glorifying to God than to wait on him, and nothing more beneficial to the saint. Waiting on God is most comprehensive, and includes faith, hope, and prayer. He who waits will not be

idle. He walks on in the middle path between presumption and despair, and is constantly on the outlook for the blessing.

7. Having once begun the glorious exercise of proving God, we are to persevere in it to the end. As long as we stand in need of mercies and interpositions, as long as trials are measured out, while we have cruel and cunning enemies within or without, and have no strength of ourselves, proving God is our only resource. We are to prove him one year after another, and we are to come up through every part of this wilderness engaged in this exercise. We are to make the last great proof at Jordan. There we should collect all God's promises and interpositions, and all our own wants and experiences, and put God in mind of what he has said to us, and done for us. Above all, we should *then* fix the eye and heart upon the merit of Christ, grasp it by new and vigorous believing, and once for all bring God to the great touchstone of mercy and faithfulness, and importune him for salvation.

Proving in its present mode must end *there*. In heaven, having received complete salvation, we can no more hope for it. There we shall know as we are known, and see Christ as he is. That which is in part will be done away, and attainment and happiness will be perfect. We will then enjoy that God whom we have now proved, and cry out with unspeakable rapture, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice

in his salvation." The beatific vision of which we have often heard will be then fully enjoyed, and our happiness will be as complete as endless!

In fine, faith must pervade the whole exercise. We must beware of proving God as we do persons of whose dispositions we are ignorant, or who may not have it in their power to help us, however much they might be inclined. Far less are we to prove God as some, in a time of extreme necessity, are obliged to apply to an enemy. No; we must believe that he is a rewarder of them that seek him, that he is rich in mercy to all who call on him, and that with him there is plenteous redemption. Some have been tried in human courts by their sworn enemies, and could not prevent it. The event was, as might have been expected. Unbelief is the sworn enemy of God and man, and if allowed to have place in proving God, has not a single good word to say of him. It speaks ill of his promises. It makes haste. It urges the saint to apply to another quarter, and wait no longer. Faith alone discovers the object to be proved, the touchstone to which it should be brought; and it alone can compare them together. Faith only can draw a proper conclusion. Indeed this precious grace itself, as exerted in prayer, constitutes the glorious exercise of proving God. It takes encouragement from such words as these, "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them: If ye shall ask any thing in my name I will do it." Relying on his faithfulness, it wrestles, and will have them accomplished.

Having endeavoured to illustrate the exercise of proving God, before leaving this part of the subject, we might speak a little concerning the call, which God gives to his Church and people to engage in it. He says *prove me*.

1. This gracious call implies, that whatever was wrong with Israel no blame could be imputed to God. Sincerity and uprightness love the light. It was God's design to bring his people to compare his conduct to them with theirs to him. There was much wrong with *them*. They omitted duty, and neglected the tithes. The Lord was provoked, and threatened them with famine. Inattentive to the *cause*, they complained much of the *effect*. In this, as in other cases, unbelief laid all the blame on God. To discover to them where it *really* lay, God called them to prove him. He was willing that his conduct should undergo the narrowest scrutiny, well knowing that the decision would be, "My ways are equal, and yours unequal."

Some often blame the Lord's providence, when, upon proper inquiry, it would clearly appear, that fools are afflicted because of their transgression and iniquities; that the Lord punishes less than our iniquities deserve; that all things work together for good to the saints; and that all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep his covenant. And, which is more strange still, some are ready to blame God for restraining his grace and Spirit, and lay their deadness in duties at his door instead of their own. They grudge with him for not giving them greater measures of consolation, liberty,

and liveliness in duties. On impartial examination, they would be fully convinced that if they are dead, lifeless, and unsavoury in duty, it is wholly owing to themselves, and not to God. They would find that they have grieved the Spirit, and either quenched his motions, or not cherished them; and that, instead of improving his grace, they have misimproved and sinned it away. Whatever our strait or difficulty be, proving God will evince that we are not straitened in him, but in our own bowels. Well does God know this; and that *we* may know it, he calls us to do duty, and prove him. To have matters rectified, it is of great importance to know where the failure lies. When men smart for their wrong conduct, nothing brings them so soon to observe and rectify it as close dealing with God, which always brings us to search and try our ways, and issues in a turning to the Lord.

2. God's call to prove him is expressive of his desire to be importuned for the blessing, and his willingness to bestow it. Like the whole of salvation, every revival and all suitable exercise originate with God. Observing those who have wrestled with him and prevailed, we will find, as with Jacob, that their desire for the blessing was from his grace, their importunity and perseverance from his upholding power, and their refusing to take any denial from his amazing condescension. God's call to prove him is of the same nature, and with the same kind design, with the benevolent and gracious question put to the impotent man who had lain thirty-eight years at the pool, Wilt thou be made whole?

or what he asked at the blind men, What will ye that I should do unto you? It is opening his heart, that we may importune him to open his hand and bless. He promises, that we may pray and ask. He invites, that we may come; and he offers, that we may receive. Till brought to be importunate, we neither have just views of the value of the blessing, nor are our hearts in a right frame for receiving it. The Lord delays and hides, that we may be prepared. His time for bestowing the blessing is always ready; not so the time of our preparation for receiving it.

3. God's call to prove him opens a door for the greatest familiarity and boldness, and lays a solid foundation for the strongest faith. For sinful dust and ashes to wrestle with God and prove him, is truly great and arduous work; but his own call is the warrant. Venturing on it, the poor believer cannot use too much freedom and familiarity. This encouraged Abraham in his fervent and repeated supplication for Sodom. Impressed with his own sinfulness, he thought he had used much freedom when he had spoken once; but God's condescension convinced him that his familiarity was scarcely begun. Those only who have some experience of it, can form any suitable ideas of that astonishing boldness and intimacy, which the believer uses with God when wrestling for the blessing. Never did earthly friends make so free with one another. In this solemn exercise often the Christian is ready to faint; but he considers the grounds of faith, renews his strength, takes

fresh courage, and perseveres in wrestling till he obtain.

4. The Divine call is also the great mean of bringing the Lord's people to the glorious exercise of proving him. While it is expressive of his willingness to give, it is the appointed mean of influencing them to apply. As the Gospel call is the mean of awakening the dead sinner, so the frequent and kind invitations to prayer and proving, are the means of reclaiming the straying, and quickening the declining saint. It is on this account that God so often addresses his people in such language as this, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." These calls have not power and virtue in themselves to produce the effect; but they are the channel for conveying those gracious influences, which infallibly bring the saints to proper exercise. Though morally dead in our natural state, the Lord addresses us as rational creatures; and though all the efficacy be from the Holy Ghost alone, still he exerts it in the use of means. He never works upon the soul but in and by the word. This method sweetly joins these truths—that the strongest exertions on the believer's part are duty, and that all the efficacy is of grace. Thus at God's call, the Christian works out his own salvation, and God works in him both to will and to do. While grace inclines to duty, it also crowns it with success.

In fine, when complied with, God's call ensures success. The Lord never calls to fruitless exercise. As sure as his promise and oath are true, right

proving of God will open the windows of heaven, and draw down the blessing. Engaging cordially and conscientiously in any duty, we have no reason to fear that our labour shall be in vain in the Lord.

This part of the subject is practical in itself, and the less application is necessary. It directs our attention to three things, calculated to fill the mind with astonishment—God's condescension, the believer's doubting, and the carelessness of the sinner. God is willing to bestow every blessing. He wants to be importuned. He beseeches and entreats. When his people are importunate he hears them, and when backward he bears with them. Their best frames are owing to his grace, and he loves them in their worst. He admits them to great intimacy and nearness. He is never kinder than when they are most familiar. If he frowns, it is for their benefit. If he withdraws, it is that they may follow. If he delays, it is that they may prove him. He will not give up with them. He is determined to save them, and will take every method to promote their spiritual interest.

The murmuring and doubting of the saints is astonishing. God's word and oath are pledged that they shall not want. They are called to pour out their hearts, and ask all they need. They should seek, and not be afraid. He has given Christ unto them, and will withhold nothing. They should prove and wrestle, and they shall be successful. They should not call his word in question, but be strong in faith. Other creatures may want, but goodness and mercy shall follow them. In what a glorious light does

their familiarity with God place them! They are his friends, and favourites of heaven. They have an intercourse with the far country. Their hearts are above. They are still in the wilderness. They cannot expect heaven by the way. Trials are necessary. They exercise grace and prove it to be genuine. They increase it, and meeten the Christian for glory. Indeed the saints should believe!

Sinners care for none of these things. Their necessities are great, but they will not ask. They are strangers to God. They hate prayer. If they attempt it, it is only in a cold, formal way, infinitely removed from proving. They know not the value of the blessing, nor the veracity of the promise. They are far from God. If they continue, and will not prove him; he will thrust them still farther, and say, Depart from me. Oh sinners, begin, and pray, and prove.



SERMON XV.

MALACHI III. 10.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

THE Lord lives. He is Sion's steady friend. Whoever may be against the Church, he is always on her side. If matters prosper, it is owing to his kindness and care. Even when provoked, he is loath to depart. In times of the greatest declension, his affectionate language is, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." When provoked to inflict judgment he does it with reluctance. He ardently desires a revival. He uses every mean to produce it. He warns his people of their danger, directs them to the path of duty, and promises the blessing. He wants to be importuned that it may be actually bestowed. He promises that nothing shall obstruct Divine communication, or prevent the bless-

ing. Rather than it should be withheld, he promises to open the windows of heaven and pour it out.

Having discussed the previous parts of this text, we now come to that important branch, where God promises to pour out the blessing. While the Lord's blessing is always infinitely excellent in itself, it may convey different ideas, and contains articles in some respects distinct, as it is promised to, or bestowed upon, an individual, or a Church and people. In the words before us, it evidently respected the Church as a collective body, but included something to every individual saint.

IV. We go on to speak of God's promising to pour out the blessing. In considering this important part of the subject, we shall endeavour to explain the blessing, the metaphor of pouring it out, and God's opening the windows of heaven that it may be communicated till there be not room to receive.

Concerning the blessing here promised we shall make the following observations.

1. It includes a removing the *curse* with its *causes* and *effects*. The Lord had cursed them with a curse, even that whole nation. There was, no doubt, at that time a good number of real saints among the Jews; but the greater part were sinners. Corruption and declension were almost universal, and the Lord was angry with them as a collective body. He called them to bring the tithes into his house, and promised to bless them—that is, he would remove the curse.

The curse of God in Scripture most frequently denotes the great sentence of condemnation, under which all the children of Adam equally are, as they come into this world; but sometimes it means a particular judgment inflicted on account of some great transgression. In this last sense, sometimes whole nations, and at other times individual offenders, fall under the curse. The greatest part of the Jewish Church were still in their natural state, and so under the curse in the first sense; and the most, if not the whole, were under it in the second. On account of withholding the tithes, they were under present tokens of the Lord's anger. Strictly speaking, real saints cannot be under the curse; but they may have a deep hand in the transgression, and provoke the Lord with their inventions; they may be instrumental in drawing down judgments, and be sharers along with others in the common calamity. When God promised the blessing, it meant that he would wholly remove the curse in the last sense, and, as to many of them, the great sentence of condemnation. When the blessing should be conferred, many would be converted, and all of them delivered from the present heavy judgment.

He would also remove the *causes* of the immediate stroke inflicted on them. These were the sins mentioned in this chapter. He would remove these in respect of guilt, by laying them on the great scape-goat, and bringing many of those who were guilty to consent to this deed, and improve the remedy. He would also put a stop to the prevalence of the sins complained of. The revival of religion would issue

in their repenting of, and turning from, their iniquities. These would be removed as grounds of controversy, as separating between them and their God, and as obstacles in the way of the blessing. This affords us a true criterion by which we may judge when God may be said to bless this or any other sinful land: the causes of his contending will be in a great measure removed, and sins formerly prevalent will be given up, both in affection and practice. This, like every other part of the blessing, comes from God. He alone, by his grace without us, can remove the guilt of sin, and by his grace within us the power. The *effects* of the curse would also be removed. These were various, both on God's part, and their own. God was angry, and hid his face. He contended, and wrote bitter things against them. He threatened judgments, and partly inflicted them. In a great measure he acted as their enemy. All these he would remove by turning away his anger. On their part were sin and suffering. They smarted for their conduct; but they were obstinate, and refused to be reclaimed. They had inward murmurings, and outward wickedness. They withheld the tithes, and robbed God. All these things would be removed by the Divine blessing. Their famine and want should be no more. Their ills of doing and suffering would cease; and Haggai's words would be verified to them, "From this day will I bless you."

3. It concludes the *favour* of God, and the *fruits* of it. When God blesses a person or people, they may sing as in Isai. xii. 1, "Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst

me." The favour of God sometimes signifies his great purpose of grace in himself, which is the source of every spiritual blessing: at other times it is taken for present favourable dealing—when, instead of anger or threatening, he speaks peace to his people, and lifts up the light of his countenance. In this last sense it is to be understood here. Well can believers distinguish between God's fatherly anger, and the intimations of his love. The fruits of his favour are many and great, and will be partly explained afterward. At present we shall only say that his promises are accomplished to his people, and his perfections exerted in their behalf. In consequence of this they enjoy sweet communion. If an angry God makes sinners quake, and saints tremble, (see Psal. cxix. 120,) a God reconciled, and intimating that he is pacified, will fill the heart with gladness, and the mouth with praise. When the fruits of Divine favour are enjoyed, matters go well in Judah, and in the heart of every saint.

3. The acceptation of their services was another part of the blessing. When God called them to bring the tithes, and promised that he would bless them, he intimated that he would graciously accept their offerings. In justification, the persons and all the services of the saints are accepted. This acceptance is in the Beloved, and for his sake. This blessing is unalterable, unceasing, and incapable of increase or diminution. It commences in the same moment with spiritual life, and runs parallel with it as to duration. Prosperity and adversity, life or death, proper or improper conduct, never vary this

acceptance. It is unalterable. The ground of it is without us, and infinitely perfect.

Besides this, there is a particular acceptance of some services expressive of God's peculiar approbation. As to those who are justified in Christ, this is founded on the former, and may be considered as a kind intimation of it; and there is commonly something remarkably excellent both in the acceptance, and the manner in which God intimates it. We have an instance of this when God sent a prophet to acquaint David how well he took it, that it was in his heart to build him an house. It is likewise exemplified in the woman who washed Christ's feet with her tears: while the Pharisee entertained harsh thoughts on account of her former character, the Saviour commended the woman, and kindly accepted her service. Many, whose persons were not accepted before God, but still under the curse, have often met with something similar to this acceptance on account of some signal service done to God, or his Church. Jehu's zeal for the Lord was rewarded with the throne. The repentance of the Ninevites saved their city; and God took it well that, at the voice of the unknown prophet, they repented in dust and ashes from the highest to the lowest.

4. The Divine blessing here promised likewise included gracious retribution and reward. When they brought all the tithes, he would not put them off with mere favourable acceptance, however valuable in itself; but would graciously reward them. Their hearts would be filled with grace, and their land and houses with plenty. None ever were losers by the

service of God. While the ark was with Obed-edom, the Lord graciously rewarded his care, by making all he had to prosper. When Abraham entertained God's angels, the promise of Isaac was sealed to him. The kindness of Lot to the messengers from heaven was rewarded with a miraculous deliverance, when the city was destroyed by fire and brimstone. The widow of Sarepta was likewise well repaid for her trouble and cost with Elijah. In every period there have been many instances of the Lord's people attending his ordinances with great difficulty, and making strong exertions to support his interest; but they received such support and consolation as compensated every difficulty, and encouraged their hearts. As the Lord has often rewarded individuals, in the text he promised retribution to the whole nation. He was to bestow great outward prosperity. Under the Old Testament, this was an usual blessing. They had a delightsome land—a land which flowed with milk and honey. Even in New Testament times, the Lord's people in general are not in want. They may be poor and afflicted, but God will provide. What is good he will give. Often the Israelites found in experience that outward prosperity and religion kept pace with one another. Under David and Solomon holiness and happiness met together, and piety and prosperity kissed each other. Under Asa and Jehoshaphat matters went well in the land. But when religion declined, and sin prevailed; when God's ordinances were neglected, and altars erected to idols, their prosperous state was turned into misery. Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is

a reproach to any people; and, if persisted in, will prove their ruin.

Addressing only a few individuals about temporal prosperity as a part of the blessing, it will not be improper to give the following direction: Seek not great things for yourselves. Christ has sanctified a state of indigence and poverty. In this respect his people have generally the advantage of himself. They commonly have some place of residence, while he had nowhere to lay his head. It is true his enemies often have the greatest share of outward good things; but with them it is a kind of peradventure. Godliness has the promise of this life, as well as that which is to come; and the covenant of grace secures to the real Christian that his bread shall be given, and his water made sure. Some have compared outward good things to the leaves of a tree, and the Lord's people to the fruit. When the fruit is gathered, the leaves fall off. When all God's people shall be brought home to glory, the creatures, as no more necessary, shall instantly fade and fall away.

5. The Lord was to bless his Church at this time in such a manner as to make his kindness and interposition evident. The blessing was to come with visibility and observation. Great outward prosperity could not fail to be noticed by themselves and others, and especially on the back of such famine. As *plenty* would proclaim God to be the author, the *season* would proclaim his goodness. The Lord blessed them in the same manner, when they laid the foundation of the second temple, Hag. ii. 19. While the blessing attracted their own attention, their enemies

would likewise see the finger of God, and be constrained to say, The Lord hath done great things for them. Israel's enemies have often been forced to confess that the blessing accompanied Israel, and say as Abimelech to Isaac, Gen. xxvi. 26—29, We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee, and thou art now the blessed of the Lord. Even when the Lord's way with his church is more spiritual, there is often a certain visibility in his blessing, especially in times of great revival. Eminent spiritual mercies make the blessing evident to the church herself; and when there is much purity and holiness, when ordinances are powerful and successful, when conversion and upbuilding make rapid progress, enemies themselves will observe the Lord's goodness. They will discover a watchful, kind, and almost miraculous Providence disappointing all their designs against Zion, defeating their counsels; and exceeding the most sanguine hope of the church herself. When religion flourishes, whatever they may say, the church's enemies will discern in legible characters on her walls this inscription, JEHOVAH SHAMMAH. It may be laid down as a maxim, If Zion could only be brought to care properly for the Lord's work, the Lord would care for her and her interest.

6. The blessing also included spiritual and saving mercies. No instance can be adduced of a person or people who sought the Lord, and valued his blessing, being satisfied without saving mercies. Should the Lord give them as much outward prosperity as their hearts could desire, with Luther they would protest, they would not be put off with these

for their portion. Outward mercies would neither be enough for God to give, nor his people to receive. They would by no means be adequate to God's love, nor the happiness which he means to bestow; neither would they satisfy the wants of the soul, nor constitute that great salvation which the Lord's people desire. Once brought to proper exercise, the Israelites would by no means have been satisfied with the reward of corn and wine, without the sure mercies of David; and no blessing whatever will satisfy the believing soul, without mercy in the day of the Lord. The great temporal blessings bestowed on the saints of old were an emblem of the vast spiritual fulness of the covenant of grace, and their outward wealth and exalted offices were typical of the spiritual dignity of the Lord's people, who are kings and priests to their God. As to these spiritual blessings, the new covenant is filled with them. There we have pardon and peace; imputed righteousness, and inherent holiness; strength and consolation; grace and glory. That covenant is ordered in all things, and is all our salvation. Well may the saints say, "Oh how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!"

7. The Divine blessing includes a powerful virtue from the Lord accompanying outward mercies and spiritual means, without which they could not answer the end. Without a certain concurring virtue, outward mercies would be useless and inefficacious. Bread would be as stones, and our food like scorpions. Besides this, there is a secret virtue which

makes persons *enjoy* these mercies. This is mentioned, Acts xiv. 17, God left not himself without witness, in that he did good, filling our hearts with food and *gladness*. There we have an account not only of the outward blessing coming from God, but likewise the enjoyment of it.

Virtue of another kind is equally necessary to make any spiritual mean answer the great design for which it is appointed. This is the energy of the Holy Ghost, which is absolutely necessary, and alone efficacious. This is to the Christian more than his soul is to his body. By it he is quickened and supported, enlightened and revived. By this energy is not merely meant the inhabitation of the Spirit, but his active agency, without which the promises are dark and sapless, ordinances lifeless and unprofitable, and duties tasteless and insipid. When this agency is powerfully exerted, and the precious influences of the Spirit are bestowed in a large measure, they constitute the sweet attainment which is known by the name of manifestations, communion, and the enjoyment of God. These give the most peculiar relish to religious exercises. Such enjoyments make the believer's happy seasons, and sweetly constrain him to say, This is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven. Then God is glorified, and the enlarged heart runs with pleasure in the way of his precepts.

Passing many other things, we shall only add, that the blessing is always suited to the case of these on whom it is bestowed. Among the saints, some need one thing, and some another. The Lord makes his

blessing suit them all. He quickens one, and comforts another. He supports the weak, and succours the tempted. He revives the declining, and visits the deserted. He gives the blind their sight, and raises up the bowed down. He heals the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He executeth judgment for the oppressed, giveth food to the hungry, and looseth the prisoners. The blessing has always such effects as carry indubitable evidence that it comes from a gracious God. It dispels our fears, and quiets the mind. It endears ordinances, and gives them peculiar relish. It sweetens all our outward mercies, and alleviates our trials. It fills the heart with desire for the full enjoyment of God, and makes the saint resolve to wait on the Lord till that happy period arrive. In one word, the blessing is the pledge and foretaste of glory. When the Lord bestows one saving mercy, he says, I will see you again. The blessing is a cluster from the land of promise, proclaiming the riches of that distant country, kindly inviting to it, and supporting in the way. Among all saving blessings there is an indissoluble connexion, grace and glory are inseparable. This is taught by the apostle, Rom. viii. 30, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

While the blessing itself is remarkable, the manner of bestowing it merits attention. The Lord promises to *pour it out*. This figure,

1. Is expressive of God's bounty and liberality. He delights in mercy. We are not straitened in him.

He takes many methods to acquaint sinners with the greatness of his love, and the riches of his grace. When he promises to pour out the blessing, he compares it to rain. The various benefits conferred on the saint from his conversion till he is introduced to glory, are compared to the former and latter rain. Accordingly we are called to ask of the Lord rain, and he promises to make bright clouds, and give showers of rain to every one grass in the field, (Zech. x. 1.) The great blessings of the new covenant are promised, Isa. xlv. 3, under the idea of pouring water on the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. Nothing can be more expressive of infinite bounty, than when the most precious blessings, instead of being given in a scanty measure, are poured out from God's all-sufficing fulness like rain from the clouds. While the Lord instructs us about his liberality by this and such figures, he frequently, and in the plainest manner, asserts the reality and greatness of his bounty: He assures us that the most heinous sins bear no proportion to his mercy, and that however numerous our iniquities be, he will multiply to pardon. He has given the most satisfying evidences and conclusive proofs of his infinite liberality in bestowing grace on his greatest enemies, and receiving into favour those who had most opposed him. Above all, his bounty and the liberality of his grace are most illustriously displayed in not sparing his only begotten Son, but delivering him up to the death; in freely setting him before sinners of every description; and using every mean to bring them to receive him and his salvation.

2. It points out the number and variety of Divine blessings, as one drop falls after another when the rain is poured out from the clouds; so there is a constant succession of the various blessings which the Lord bestows upon his people. Like the waves, they constantly succeed one another. From the moment of conversion, to all eternity, he pours out blessings without intermission. Though these should be in different degrees, and though the soul should not always equally apprehend them, his loving-kindness is never taken away, and he waters the whole of his vineyard every moment.

Justly is the promise called *running*, as it attends the saint in every period of his life, and supplies his wants. In it there is the sound of abundance of rain, which drops down in various successive blessings. With the greatest propriety may Christians resolve to bless God, while *they* have any being, for these various blessings; for God has promised to bless them while He lives. Thus it is the comfort and song of every saint, "God lives, blest be my Rock." Then may we number the variety of Divine blessings, when we understand the fulness of the covenant of grace, and are perfectly acquainted with the trials, necessities, and supports of the saint; when we know the designs and attacks of his enemies, and the infinite and unceasing care of God in his momentary keeping of his vineyard; and when we can comprehend what is contained in that most extensive blessing, I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; or can number the drops of rain or dew which fall from the clouds. Of these blessings we may justly

say, as in Psal. xl. 5, “ Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works, which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.”

3. It seems also expressive of the extent of the blessing, or the number of those who receive it. When the sky darkens, not one place only, but vast numbers are watered. When Israel brought the tithes, many more would receive the blessing than in their present condition when they robbed God. Under this judgment those who enjoyed Divine countenance were so few, that they would appear in their own eyes as the prophet when he seemed to be left alone. This promise evidently respects New Testament times, and points out the superior extent of the blessing under that dispensation. When used by the prophets, the term *pouring* commonly has a reference to the Christian church. The seventy-second Psalm respects the kingdom of the Messiah. There it is promised that he shall come down as the rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth. We have similar expressions in many passages in Isaiah’s prophecies. In Joel ii. 28, God promises to pour his Spirit upon all flesh. Then New Covenant blessings, instead of being confined to Judea, shall fill that dominion which extends from sea to sea. Then that remarkable prophecy about the Gentile church, in Isai. liv. 1—3, will he accomplish: “ Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that

didst not travail with child : for more is the children of the desolate than the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations ; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen then thy stakes. For thou shalt break forth on the right-hand, and on the left ; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities inhabited.”

4. It points out that the blessing is under the direction of an infinitely wise God. In however great quantity or variety the blessing may be poured out, still it is by *God himself* ; and it must and will fall where he inclines it. When he opens the natural clouds, the rain falls upon one city and not on another ; and so it is, when he comes down as showers upon the mown grass, or as the former and latter rain. He can water a fleece, when all around is dry ; or keep the fleece dry, when all around is wet. This proclaims comfort to the poor believer, who is ready to apprehend that he is unnoticed or forgotten. If his fleece is dry now, it will be watered in the Lord’s time. It likewise secures the election of grace. The Lord knows them that are his. Wherever they are, he will seek them out, and water them with the blessing. No enemy or event can hinder this, more than they can prevent the falling of the rain. At certain times, and from sinful or selfish views, many have *wished* that the natural rain might not fall ; but they *never attempted* to prevent it. Every method which hell and earth can devise has been tried to obstruct the blessing. The united efforts of deceit and violence have been often employed to prevent

the means of grace from reaching certain places, or being fixed in them. When settled, every attempt has been used to mar the success, and defeat the end. Sometimes the deepest plots have been laid and the strongest exertions made to remove the candlestick out of its place. But sooner shall the drops falling from the clouds be kept from reaching the earth, than the Lord's blessing from reaching those for whom it was designed. The Christian's enemies have all joined in the closest combination to prevent him from enjoying the blessing. Sin tries to separate between him and his God; but all his iniquities shall pass away as a thick cloud. In the same wicked cause Satan makes continued and cruel exertions; but the God of peace shall bruise Satan, and rebuke the devourer. The world too uses every alluring art and terrifying method to prevent him from seeking or receiving the blessing; but more and mightier are they that are with him, than all who can be against him; and he shall be blessed. The most crafty counsels of his enemies shall be defeated, and their most vigorous efforts rendered abortive. Like the natural, the spiritual rain shall fall irresistibly; and the Lord's people shall be watered.

5. This manner of expression has a respect to the Holy Spirit. We have a proof of this, Isai. xlv. 3, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses." The term pouring out does not

so much respect the person of the Holy Spirit, as his precious influences. He himself is given absolutely to every saint, and dwells in his heart; but his influences are poured out in various measures. This is intimated, Titus iii. 4—6, “ But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us *abundantly*, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” His quickening and sanctifying, his strengthening and comforting influences are frequently mentioned in Scripture as having qualities and effects corresponding to water and rain. They drop down upon the dry parched ground of the human heart, and make it fruitful in all good works.

In fine, it intimates that the blessing is free. They must be strangers to themselves who think they either deserve the natural rain, or can do any thing to procure it. Though it falls down upon us, it is always without any merit or exertion of ours. The spiritual rain is still more undeserved. If we should never enjoy it till we deserve it, we would suffer an eternal drought. These showers tarry not for man nor wait for the sons of men. The first blessing is preventing; and every succeeding one is free and undeserved. We do much to provoke the Lord to withhold the blessing; but nothing to deserve it.

That the blessing may be poured out, God promises to *open the windows of heaven*. This expression is significant, forcible, and emphatic

This phrase is seldom used in Scripture, but when mentioned, the occasion is most memorable. It is first used in Gen. vii. 11, where God opened the windows of heaven to pour out his wrath and indignation on the old world, and the rain was so violent, and of such continuance, that not a living creature escaped, except the few who were in the ark. Were we to contrast with this, God's opening the windows of heaven to pour out a blessing, it would open a field for the most pleasing and profitable considerations. We have another account of the windows of heaven in 2 Kings vii. 1, 2, where Elisha prophesied that plenty was just at hand, but a great man said, "Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" The reply to Elisha was in the language of unbelief, and plainly intimated that such a thing was most unlikely, and altogether impossible without a miracle, and even in a miraculous way most improbable. With its ingenuity, faith should take the weapon of Satan and unbelief, and employ it against themselves. Speaking of opening the windows of heaven to pour out a blessing, with an allusion to this passage, affords these precious truths:—that the Lord can and will bless, when to carnal sense and reason it seems wholly impossible: that rather than the Lord will not bless his people, he will act as a wonder-working God, and perform miracles of mercy: and that when God has said he will bless, faith may safely rely upon his word, and expect the blessing in spite of every obstacle.

As the windows of heaven literally mean the clouds—the vehicles of rain; spiritually they mean

the prophecies and promises which are the vehicles of Divine influences. When God promises to open the windows of heaven, and pour blessings on the New Testament church, he particularly means that to them should be accomplished the Old Testament prophecies and promises. When these were given, they were in a great measure sealed and locked up; but in New Testament times, they are all set open and pour out their precious contents. Of old, the church had only the shadow; now she has the substance. Spiritual blessings in their progress may be compared to the waters which issued out from under the threshold of the sanctuary, Ezek. xlvi. 1—6. At first they were to the ankles; afterwards to the loins; and at last they became waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. Of old, the windows of heaven might be compared to a cloud like a man's hand; now, and especially in the latter day glory, they become so great as to cover the heaven. *Then* the Lord, as it were, sprinkled his blessings only on a few in the land of Judea; *now* he opens the windows of heaven and pours them out plentifully and extensively. To the New Testament belongs the accomplishment of the beautiful prophecy, Hos. i. 10, 11, "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured, nor numbered, and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. Then shall the children of Judah, and the children of Israel, be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head,

and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel." And also, chap. ii. 23, "I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy: and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God."

The idea of opening the windows of heaven to pour out the blessing intimates that the Lord will bless in the *appointed way*. Naturally, the way to remove famine is to open the clouds and send rain. At the end of a great famine, recorded 1 Kings xviii. 41, Elijah prayed and it rained. When our heavens over our heads are made brass, and the earth that is under us as iron, famine must ensue; but when the rain comes, in the language of Hosea, the heaven hears the earth, and the earth Jezreel. It is exactly so with spiritual blessings. The Lord makes his people feel their need, and cry to him. He hears from heaven, pours out the blessing, and produces spiritual plenty.

The manner of expression points out the heavenly origin of spiritual blessings. They come from above. A man can receive nothing except it be given him from above. No blessing can reach us without the appointment and gift of God. Salvation is wholly of grace. God alone can open the windows of heaven, and he only can open our shut hearts. He removes every obstacle in the way of the blessing, both on his part and ours.

In fine, we cannot think of the windows of heaven being opened without recollecting God's cheerfulness in pouring out the blessing. He opens these windows

as a proof that his heart is not shut, that he is rich in mercy, and delights to give. This promise proves that his bowels yearn to his people, and that he is loath to give up with them. Opening these windows, he pours out blessings that there *shall not be room enough to receive*. He removes *all* their ills, and supplies *all* their wants. He defends them against *all* attacks, and supports them in *every* trial. He will make all who plead his promise, and prove him, happy *without interruption or end!* We shall now subjoin a few inferences.

1. This subject points out the nature and effects of sin. It pours contempt upon God's authority, and neglects the duties enjoined by him. While highly dishonouring to God, it is hurtful to the sinner, draws down judgments, and, if persisted in, will land him in hell. Here it brought on a famine, and provoked God to withhold the blessing. The sins of believers cannot be less provoking, but are often more heinous. God's jealousy burns hottest near his altar. Though he forgives the iniquities of his people, he takes vengeance of their inventions. God has many ways of pleading a controversy with his own people, with which the world is unacquainted. He takes away his Spirit, and hides his face. He frowns in his providential dispensations. As the saints by their provocations have a great hand in drawing down judgments, they often suffer signally in the common calamity. The most favoured saints at this time felt the severity of famine, as well as the most careless sinners.

2. It points out the nature and design of the judgments inflicted on a professing people. They are chastisements and punishments for *past* sins. They are calculated to bring sin to remembrance, without which none can be suitably exercised about their former iniquities. Judgments have a gracious design as to *futurity*. They are intended to turn men from the evil of their ways, and reclaim them. Their language is, *Turn you at my reproof*. They are always mixed with mercy, and these on whom they are inflicted may say, we “will sing of mercy and judgment.” In general they are an evidence that God has not said concerning a people, “Let them alone.” They are often heaviest where God has the greatest design of grace. This is implied in his address to Israel, Amos iii. 2, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” They are designed in a particular manner as warnings to fly from the wrath to come, and should be viewed as coming from God with this inscription, “I hate sin, and must punish it; I have borne long, and your cup is full: my patience is abused, and I must strike the stroke: if temporal judgments are so grievous, what must future wrath be! Be warned, and fly from it: now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.”

3. Proper work and exercise under tokens of the Lord’s anger. We should perform duty, and pay the tithes. Prosperity without the performance of duty is cursed; and these calamities and afflictions which do not bring us back to duty are unsanctified. With-

out turning to the Lord, we have no evidence of acting with propriety, and we cannot turn to him but by fervent supplication and prayer. Many exercises, by some called prayer, are far removed from proving God. When his hand is upon us, we should wrestle with him; and give him no rest. We should stir up ourselves, take hold of his strength, and implore the blessing. Were we willing to ask, he is never unwilling to give. He calls us to prove, that *we* may seek, and *he* bestow. There cannot be a worse sign than carelessness, obduracy, and insensibility under judgments. They often provoke the Lord to give up with a people, saying, "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more."

SERMON XVI.

PROVERBS XXIV. 30, 31, 32.

I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.

IF the carnal mind were not enmity against God, and incapable of discerning spiritual things, the Scriptures would be universally admired. Laying aside the idea of Divine inspiration, they are inimitably beautiful both in respect of sentiment and composition. There is a vast variety, and every one would find something to gratify his peculiar taste. The mind which loves the historic page would be wonderfully pleased with the history of the old world; and the amazing vicissitudes of the posterity of Jacob. How many miraculous events took place from their going down into Egypt to the destruction of their city and temple by the Romans! The person delighted with the lofty strains of poetry, would find infinite gratification in some ancient songs composed to celebrate certain signal deliverances; as when Israel sang after their passage through the Red Sea;

and Deborah when Sisera fell before her. The book of Job, the prophecies of Isaiah, and the performances of the sweet singer of Israel, would fill his heart with admiration. The book of Ecclesiastes would suit the mind anxious to be acquainted with the works of nature; and the Proverbs of Solomon are an unequalled system of morality. Were it not for the vitiated and depraved taste of mankind, the celebrated Parnassus would be forsaken for Zion hill, and the poisonous streams once sacred to the Muses, would be exchanged for the wells of salvation. But *the Scriptures are divine*; and “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” God hath written to us the great things of his law, but they are counted as a strange thing by the bulk of mankind; and the distinguishing beauty and excellency of Divine revelation are for the most part hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes.

The book of Proverbs has been justly compared to a great number of bright gems cast together in a large heap, without regard to order. The text is a striking account of the sluggard, and the sad consequences of his conduct, with a design to awaken him from his fatal lethargy, and delusive dream, before it be too late; and to be a beacon and monitor to others. A greater than Solomon passes by, and observes the conduct of the sons of men.

I. We propose to delineate the character of the slothful.

II. To consider the state of his field and vineyard, all grown over with thorns, and covered with nettles, and the stone wall thereof broken down. Then,

III. With Solomon, To inquire what instructions may be received. We return to the first of these, which is,

I. To delineate the character of the slothful.

1. He enjoys the same seasons and opportunities with others. He had a vineyard, and a proper opportunity for cultivating and dressing it. Without this he could neither deserve the character, nor be subject to the blame. Misimproving the opportunity, losing the proper season, and neglecting his field, constitute the distinguishing features of his character. The spiritual sluggard enjoys a season of merciful visitation, and a day of grace, with an express injunction to work while it is to-day, and a certain assurance that the night cometh in which no man can work. Where Divine revelation is enjoyed, the sinner has precious opportunity for every duty. The sluggard might improve much of the time he spends in idleness and sleep, in searching the Scriptures, and performing other duties. He enjoys the Sabbath in common with others; but that day is the greatest burden to him, as the other six are to the man who is slothful about his temporal concerns. He enjoys a summer and harvest for working out his own salvation. This season is called a seed-time, and he is certified, that as he sows, so shall he reap. How

can the man expect a plentiful or seasonable harvest who sits in his house, sleeps in his bed, or *whiles* away his time, when others are taking the seed from the barn, and filling the ground. The Jews enjoyed a precious opportunity when Christ was among them; but if we now turn our eyes to Shiloh, we will discover the fatal effects both of malice and sloth. Could we look within the veil, and listen to the doleful complaints of those who have perished through sloth, we would hear them cursing that love of ease which brought them to such an horrible situation, and bewailing and gnashing of their teeth over neglected opportunities.

2. He is thoughtless about futurity, and neglects the means without which the end cannot be attained. *He is thoughtless about futurity.* He does not consider how he shall be, or what he shall do. He prefers present ease to his true interest. In a sense diametrically opposite to what Christ intended, he lets tomorrow provide for itself, if he can get sleep and ease to-day. The man who deserves the name about spiritual things, acts in the same manner. He never thinks of the hour of trial. Death and future judgment, though infinitely important in themselves, seldom come under his consideration; and if they occur, he tries to fall the sooner asleep, that he may dismiss such painful subjects. It is certainly true wisdom in the Gospel-hearer to prepare for eternity, and to take no sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids, till he find a place for the Lord. The Saviour who laid down his life for sinners, and has the greatest concern about them, makes this his first and chief direction,

“ Seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof;” but it is the last thing to which the slothful attends. Summer is the fit season for laying in for winter; and elsewhere Solomon sends the sluggard to the most diminutive of all creatures to learn the duty of providing for futurity, Prov. vi. 6—8, “ Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which, having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.”

He neglects the means without which the end cannot be attained. This is the effect of the former. If his field is not ploughed, nor his vineyard dressed, he can expect no crop; and if he attempts any of these, it is commonly out of season. How can the man expect to reap who only begins to prepare his ground when others are reaping their fruits? God has appointed a certain connexion between the means of grace and salvation; and a total neglect, and careless performance of duties, leave no room to expect salvation, and are full evidence that it is not the great concern. The slothful man often begins only to think about eternity, when death or his harbinger threaten to summon him before the Judge; and then he makes some noise about the blessing. Esau is an example of his conduct, and in all probability of his success. A mess of pottage was compensation enough for the blessing once a day; and on apprehending his mistake, that which he once so easily parted with, cannot be now had, though sought with tears: though the least exertion would secure the blessing, the slothful will not trouble himself to make it, and says,

“ Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep;” and when death approaches, his application is commonly insincere and too late.

Some on hearing this say, “ We cannot be suré of success though we use the means: what a mercy if we could be assured that all who use the means would be saved!” In our temporal concerns, we cannot be sure of success even when we use the means; but where is the man, who, on this account, neglects to prepare and sow his field, or plant his vineyard! If we cannot be absolutely sure of a full harvest after using the means; we may be sure enough that we will have none without them. We have greater certainty of success in spiritual than in temporal concerns. He that useth the means, seeks the blessing, and aims at believing, will “ receive the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul.” Others object, “ that many have got grace here, and glory hereafter, who did not improve the means; and, like the thief on the cross, have been rescued from the mouth of hell and wafsted to heaven.” How would it look, if the greater part would give over their employ, and sit down at ease, because some unexpectedly have got a legacy enough to support them to their dying hour? Many have been imprisoned and condemned for some atrocious crime, who, on the very day appointed for execution, have received a full pardon: will others on that account commit the crime and run the risk? God, who is rich in mercy, may perform miracles of grace, and take persons into his vineyard at the eleventh hour; but his *usual* way is to bestow the blessing in the use of

means. His great direction is, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." He calls us expressly to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;" and sets before us great encouragement, "for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

3. The least thing he does is a burden, and he is deaf to every argument and consideration which would tend to reclaim him. The very thought of working, or putting himself to any trouble, is like tearing the flesh from the bone; and is, by many degrees, more tormenting to him than the thing itself to one of another character. In a spiritual sense, if he is under the necessity of attending on ordinances, or being in a company where religion is the leading subject; his heart says, "what a weariness is it!"

He is deaf to every consideration calculated to reform him. The slothful man's relations, and neighbours, who live around him, are pained at his folly, and use every argument which bids fair to reclaim him; but all in vain, for "the sluggard is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason." They point out in the plainest manner his hazard, and the risk which he runs. They warn him of the approach of the winter storm, and the straits to which he must then be reduced, when he has neither provided fuel to keep him warm, food to supply his wants, or the other necessaries of life. He may, perhaps, allow in part the propriety of all they say; but still he persists in his former course. He would rather feel the fears of future difficulties than shake

off his sloth, and exert himself to prevent them. Often is the sinner warned that the storm of Divine wrath hangs over his head, and that it will burst forth in the most tremendous peals at death. He is repeatedly told that now is the accepted time, and day of salvation. The example of others, labouring after the meat which endures to everlasting life, is set before him. He is often put in mind of the importance of eternity, and that it is a most intolerable thing to dwell with everlasting burnings. In some degree he allows the force of such arguments, and has some conviction in his own mind of the propriety of them; but if they have any effect at all, it is only such as leaves him still in the same situation.

4. He looks upon those, who reprove his present course, and advise the contrary, as his worst enemies; or at least as officious intruders disturbing his peace. We have just said, that often he partly allows the propriety of what they say, gives a tacit consent, or does not openly contradict them; but whatever he says, he entertains a secret aversion, and despises them in his heart. Though, perhaps, he does not tell it, the effect of all their reasoning, instead of amendment, is *irritation*. He finds them disturbing, and trying to break, his *present* repose. They force upon his mind the vexing thoughts of *future* straits, and plague him by pointing out his *present duty*. How descriptive is all this of the spiritual sluggard! He feels a strong aversion to every method used to break the snare, and bring him to thoughtfulness about eternity. Sometimes the assiduity and entreaties of his nearest friends have so provoked him,

that, breaking over the ties of natural affection, he has left them to see them no more, and exposed himself to many hardships to get rid of their troublesome advice and tormenting reproof. Public ordinances faithfully dispensed have often proved so pungent to his heart as to make him desert them. He found he could not *attend* and *sleep too*. They stript him of all his excuses, till at last he said of them as Ahab of Micaiah, "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me but evil." Nay more, the holy law of God itself irritates his heart, and "sin *taking occasion* by the commandment works in him all manner of concupiscence." The restraint which the holy law of God lays upon corrupt nature makes it more passionate and rebellious. This does not arise from any evil design or tendency in the law itself, but from the desperate wickedness of the human heart. As a full and complete proof of his reckoning those his greatest enemies who do all they can to reclaim him, he flies to persons of the same cast with himself, and tells them all the difficulties he apprehends he has been exposed to from those, who would force their own gloomy sentiments on others, and turn the world upside down. His heart feels vast complacency in opening itself to one of a similar character, and it seems to alleviate his misery. They strengthen one another's hands, try to stifle every conviction, and resolve to sleep on, and allow no one whatever to disturb them. They open their hearts to one another concerning the sweetness of repose, and the difficulty of always poring on death, hell, and other forbidding objects of the same nature. They even begin

to talk about their own virtues, and solace themselves with the soothing reflection that they do ill to nobody but themselves; and that God is merciful, and it would be harsh once to think he would condemn all, except such as are awakened by a law-work, and fears of hell, and pray without ceasing. Thus, happy in one another, they sleep on, and take their rest.

5. The longer the sluggard is habituated to sloth, he is the more in love with it, and the more averse to alter his course. Natural sleep, the longer it is enjoyed, like a powerful opiate, more and more benumbs the senses, is sweeter in the enjoyment, and increases the difficulty of shaking it off. Every habit, however innocent, gathers force by continuance; and is strengthened by every act. This holds true in an eminent degree of such habits as are sinful. The powerful principle of sin within is ever operative, and strengthens the habit. Many to whom this character fully belongs at last, began in very small degrees, and sloth crept on imperceptibly.

In a religious sense, many were slothful all their lives. Activity and concern about religion they never had, nor desired. Others seemed to run well, but began to slacken. One duty turned tasteless and insipid, and then another. As their love and relish to duties declined, their performance was less accurate and frequent. Excuses, which formerly were of no avail, are now valid; and duty is frequently omitted. Sin is down-hill road. From partial they proceed to total neglect; and from that to contempt. Instead of being at pains to shake off security, they

use every mean to increase it. Often a sluggard is at more trouble finding excuses to shift the work, than the work itself would cost him. It is impossible to name all their empty pleas. The least difficulty furnishes an excuse: "the sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold." Nay, rather than want an excuse, he forms imaginary difficulties to himself, and says, "there is a lion without: I shall be slain in the streets." *Now* he excuses himself from religious duties by the cares of this world: *then* by a kind of promise that he will perform them at a convenient season. At any rate, instead of being affected with his present omission, he pleads earnestly for farther indulgence, and says, Let me alone to-day,—to-morrow, or some day, I shall think of religion; at present I cannot do it; "yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." Thus "he hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again."

6. He sleeps away his time, amuses himself with unavailing resolutions of doing better in a little, and thinks that if the strait come, he will make some shift or other. If any expostulate with him, and say, "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard; when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?" instead of being affected with the just reproach, he still claims indulgence, and if he has any faint resolutions, they respect only some future period. That time comes, and finds him more in love with his situation than he was before; and still more unwilling to give up with it. So it is likely to be at any future period. Sinners, if they resolve to be religious at all, they cannot think of it

at present, but resolve to be in earnest against such a time. Such a resolution, instead of having any good effect, lulls them asleep, is considered as an extenuation of every crime, and a toleration for the neglect of every duty. They promise on life, till the time appointed arrive, which they ought by no means to do. Life is uncertain; but though they should reach the period fixed upon for the commencement of religion, every intervening hour has rendered their hearts more unfit to make their purpose effective; or rather, it has wonderfully fitted them for a new lease of sin; and is likely to issue in fixing their resolution at another period equally distant. Sinful appetites and inclinations, so long indulged, become clamorous, insist upon being gratified, and reject every excuse.

The slothful man always indulges a secret thought that if a real strait comes, he will some way or other get over it. He fondly hopes that some friend or neighbour will supply him, and neither expose him to beggary or death. The sinner pleases himself with a secret thought that, before he die, matters will be some way or other settled between God and him, *though he knows not how*. He speaks peace to his soul, and thinks that God is like himself. Though little acquainted with the Divine Being, he hopes he will be merciful. Sin bulks little in his eye, and he makes his own apprehensions of it the rule by which he judges of God's. Thus, as in Deut. xxix. 19, "He blesses himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart. to add drunkenness to thirst."

In all this delusive train of reasoning one thing is obvious and remarkable: the sluggard thinks only about supply when the strait comes, and never about his present duty of improving his field, and cultivating his vineyard: the sinner thinks only of deliverance from hell, and by no means of the great duty of glorifying God in all his actions, living for him, and walking up and down in his name.

7. The slothful entails poverty on himself, and, sooner or later, if he lives, must be a burden on others. "Poverty cometh upon him as one that travaileth, and his want as an armed man." On the other hand, the wise man assures us that "the hand of the diligent maketh rich," and adds, "the soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." Poverty is the native effect of sloth, and when reduced to the lowest ebb, the slothful must be a burden on others, for "he that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster."

The spiritual sluggard in one sense can scarcely be poorer. In him dwelleth no good thing. But, in another sense, he is daily adding to his debt, and has nothing to pay. He is feeding on husks, or pining away, while the Lord's people are filled with the finest of the wheat, and under Christ's shadow are fed with his excellent fruits. Never was a happier contrast drawn between the precious enjoyments of the saints, in proving the means of grace, and the extreme penury of the slothful man neglecting every opportunity, than we have in Isa. lxx. 13, 14, "Therefore

thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed. Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit." To the same purpose are the words of the wise man, Prov. xii. 7, "The slothful man roasteth not that which he taketh in hunting, but the substance of a diligent man is precious." It must be recollected that the poverty which the sinner entails upon himself is not only distressing, but sinful, and an article of the curse. While temporal poverty ends with the natural life, it is far otherwise with the penury of the sinner: it accompanies him to death, and will sink him to the lowest hell, if he is not interested in the unsearchable riches of Christ. It will be an additional part of his sufferings too, that Christ took this, as well as every other part of the curse, upon him, that sinners might be delivered: for "though he was rich, yet for their sakes he became poor, that they through his poverty might be rich." And "he counsels us to buy of him gold tried in the fire, that we may be rich; and white raiment that we may be clothed."

The slothful is a burden on the Church. If he professes to take Christ's yoke upon him, he does not draw equally in it with others. Nay, he draws back; and does much to make others do the same. In one word, he may do much to prevent the blessing, and mar the success of ordinances; but nothing to draw

down the one, or make the other profitable or useful. He does much to procure judgments, and divine displeasure; but nothing to avert them. Once more,

8. The whole conduct of our sluggard is a breach of bargain and contract. The vineyard and field are not his own, but *let out* to him by the proprietor. This makes his sloth highly criminal. He had promised to dress and manure them. The season comes, and the owner expects fruit, but finds none. The slothful man exposes himself not only to be deprived of the vineyard, but imprisoned and punished. Justly may the lord of the vineyard take it from such an indolent wretch, sue for damages, and give it to another, who is likely to act a better part.

There is a solemn contract between God and every person in his vineyard. Though there were no consent or stipulation on the part of the professing Christian; the grant of Divine revelation, the offer of Christ, and the dispensation of the means of grace, lay him under infinite obligation to improve. He receives the Scriptures with the express injunction to search them, as testifying of Christ, and containing eternal life. The grant of Christ is accompanied with the great command to believe on his name. Ordinances are dispensed with a call to improve them, and not receive the grace of God in vain. The Divine commandment fixes the obligation, though the sinner should never consent. But, his own interest is infinitely at stake. Every Divine command, accompanying the Scriptures, or means of grace, is of the same amount, and with the same kind intention with the words of Paul to the jailer, "Do thyself no

harm." They are designed to point out the danger of eternal death and prevent it; and set everlasting life before the sinner. In short, the sinner receives the vineyard, including all his opportunities, with this memorable injunction, "Occupy till I come."

But every Church member *professes* to give his consent, enter into an engagement to be the Lord's, and cultivate his vineyard. Most of those, who enjoy the means of grace, were dedicated to the Lord at an early period in baptism. Then, consent was given in their behalf, and till they renounce the solemn transaction, the deed is valid, and God's vows are on them. Slothful as many are, they often renew these early engagements. If ever they have been at the Lord's table, there, in a solemn manner, they made a profession of being the Lord's. If the *consent of the heart* has been withheld, their conduct is the more criminal. Never was consent required to any thing more reasonable, or advantageous; and withholding it is most dishonouring to God, and pernicious to themselves. He calls for the heart, and has the best right to it; and we should "present our bodies to him a living sacrifice which is our reasonable service."

We shall conclude at present by observing that few characters are more despicable than that of the slothful. In common life, the man, who sleeps away his time, spends it in idleness, and will not work, is universally and justly the object of contempt. But it is to be lamented, that, by the gross of mankind, the active Christian who is engaged in earnest about the concerns of his soul, and matters of eternal mo-

ment, and endeavours to improve his privileges and cultivate his heart—is equally despised and disesteemed, as the man who neglects wholly his temporal affairs, and is a complete sluggard. How vitiated is the taste of man! What will it profit a man though he should gain the whole world if he lose his own soul! There is nothing more common than to see the merchant, mechanic, and man of business, rising early and setting late to provide for the body, while the soul is altogether neglected. Passing through the country we find the trees bending under their fruit, and the gardens adorned and beautified with the richest flowers; but what a rare thing is it to find a person fervent in every duty, and working out his own salvation! The greatest earthly riches will avail nothing at death; and only an interest in the unsearchable riches of Christ will enrich for eternity.

We should be diligent, and learn from the ant. Death approaches, and the Judge is at the door. We should observe and improve our season of grace. “The stork in the heaven knows her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.” We should plough the fallow ground of our hearts, and cry to the great SOWER to sow the *good seed*. We should come under the power of the word. We should read it, consider it, and believe it to be Divine. We should be much at the throne of grace, and fervently cry for the former and latter rain. We should never forget that the great PROPRIETOR now takes particular notice,

and will soon call us to an account; and if we are then found slothful, our poverty will come upon us as an armed man; and every opportunity to alter our condition will be for ever lost! *Now* is the accepted time and the day of salvation. O that the slothful knew in **THIS** *their* day the things which belong to their peace, before they be hid from their eyes!

SERMON XVII.



PROVERBS XXIV. 30, 31, 32.

I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.

SOLOMON was the wisest of all men, and “his fame was in all nations round about. He spake three thousand Proverbs: and his Songs were a thousand and five. He spake of trees from the cedar-tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.” His praise is still in all the churches. He was an accurate observer of men, and made just reflections on their conduct. Viewed in this light, his Proverbs merit the most serious perusal; and are of signal use to direct us in every part of our conduct. But when we consider them as

given by inspiration of God, they are clothed with an infinitely higher authority, and, like other parts of Scripture, are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

In the text we have an account of Solomon's careful inspection of the field and vineyard of the sluggard. He did not satisfy himself with a cursory observation, but *considered it well*. *He looked upon it and received instruction*. He saw it in a sad situation. It was all grown over with thorns, nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down. Though silently, yet most emphatically it expressed the language and conduct of the sluggard; and pointed him out as averse to labour, and still inclined for "a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep."

Having endeavoured to delineate the character of the slothful man; with Solomon, we now proceed to consider the state of his field and vineyard. Two things here deserve our attention: *first*, it was all grown over with thorns, and covered with nettles; and *secondly*, the stone wall thereof was broken down. Of each of these in order.

Before entering directly upon the wild and uncultivated state of the slothful man's vineyard, we might observe,

That it was the only thing about which he should have employed himself, and would have been enough to have occupied his time and attention. It was given him by the owner for this purpose, and to have gained the end was all that was required. Right care about the soul, working out his own salvation,

and fearing the Lord, is the whole duty of man. The duties incumbent on the professing Christian may be distributed into various branches, and may flow out in different channels; but concern about his own salvation may be considered, in one sense, as the root and spring. If he is negligent about his own, he can scarcely be expected to care for the souls of others, or do any thing to promote their eternal interest. Without faith and personal believing it is impossible to please God, or be properly concerned about men.

He would have found it enough to have employed his time and attention. There are two leading pieces of work requisite in every vineyard: the one is, as much as possible to prevent the growth of weeds, and root them out if they begin to spring up: the other is, with all pains and diligence, to cultivate the ground, plant it with proper herbs, or sow it with profitable seeds. Applied to the sinner, the first of these includes his inspecting the heart with the greatest vigilance and watchfulness, taking the strictest care to check and oppose the motions of sin, and the continued discharge of the great duties of self-denial and mortification. The second comprehends the diligent use of every mean to promote the growth of grace, watch over the growing fruit, and preserve it from being choked. Without a continued weeding, dressing, and nursing up the useful herb, no fruit can be expected. Without the attentive performance of all these great duties, the soul cannot prosper.

We might also observe that if properly cultivated by his own hand, the vineyard promised a rich and plentiful harvest.

The vineyard and field were not barren ground. Indeed the soul of the sinner, considered in itself, and its natural state, is like the heath in the desert, or the barren rock; but his vineyard does not mean his soul *exclusively*, but as he enjoys great privileges, precious opportunities, pressing invitations, and encouraging promises. The soul, with all these advantages, and every needed blessing brought near, is the sinner's vineyard. There is no duty required, but strength to perform it is promised. In metaphorical language every instrument for digging, planting, and pruning is brought to his hand, and the precious seed of grace too. He has only to stretch out the hand and take; or merely look and be saved. If unable to do even these, strength for them is also promised. In such a situation the sinner can have no excuse, unless sloth, or which is still worse, enmity, or a positive refusal to work in the vineyard.

It must be cultivated with *his own hand*. The contrary of what Christ was reproached with, in a limited sense is true of the Gospel hearer, "He may save himself, others he cannot save." It is not meant that we cannot be useful to others: but our endeavours with others are successful only in as far as they prevail with them to put their own hand to the work. We may advise others, and pray for them; but we cannot receive Christ for them, nor they for us. If a man has faith, he must have it for himself. Believing

is a personal act, and every one must surrender his own soul to God. Many other duties necessary to dressing the vineyard must be personal.

If cultivated in this manner *it promises a plentiful harvest*. Solomon saw no want in the field and vineyard of others. The slothful man's ground was equally fertile, and would, if properly managed, have been as fruitful. It is worthy of observation, that the man is not blamed for not reaping, nor even for not sowing, nor is any blame imputed to the soil. His radical error was that he did not prepare the ground, or rather that he did nothing at all. He slept away his time, and in all probability did not look at his vineyard, instead of working in it. But had he prepared the ground, and sown the seed, in due time he would have reaped. If sinners would shake off their sloth, bethink themselves, break up the fallow ground of their hearts, and be in the use of means, there would be reason to expect the Divine blessing. The Sun of righteousness would shine, the former and the latter rain would drop down, and the gentle dew of heaven descend, and make the sinner's soul like a well watered garden, or a field where the Lord doth bless; and there would be fruits of righteousness here, and in the end everlasting life. We shall now, as was proposed, proceed in the

II. Place, to consider the state of the slothful man's vineyard; "and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof." About

these thorns and nettles we may observe the following things :

1. They grow spontaneously in uncultivated grounds. They neither need to be sown nor planted. They draw to their own roots the sap which would nourish a better crop. The soul of the slothful is without any improvement. Corrupt nature has its full swing, and sinful lusts their full play without the least control. The strong man keeps the house in peace, and the poor sluggard is fast asleep. In this situation briars and nettles take root, and grow up, spreading their branches in the various sins of omission and commission. A sinner's heart without Divine grace is a sad sight, "for out of it proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."

Every person must have observed that arable and fertile ground, not cared for, but uncultivated, and left to turn wild, produces a greater crop of thorns and nettles than places naturally barren. Just so; the richer the season of grace is, where the seed is not received in a good and honest heart, the weeds of corruption will grow with greater luxuriance. In this sense where grace has abounded, sin superabounds. The children of religious parents, on whom much pains have been wasted in vain, often exceed their neighbours in wickedness; and places enjoying a rich season of grace, and despising it, have brought iniquity to greater maturity, and have ripened faster for Divine judgments, than places less favoured. While the words of the prophet Ezekiel,

xvi. 46—51, verify what we have now said, they cannot be read without affecting the heart: he addresses Israel thus, “Thine elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left-hand: and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right-hand, is Sodom and her daughters. Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations; but as if that were a very little thing, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways. As I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister has not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters. Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her, and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good. Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations, which thou hast done.” To the same purpose are the words of Christ, Luke x. 12—15, “But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city—It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for thee, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven,” in respect of privileges, but, for dreadful misimprovement, “shalt be thrust down to hell.” As it was then, so it is now.

The noxious weeds of sin would enough flourish in the uncultivated heart of their own accord, and without any culture: but the human heart *of itself deviseth*

iniquity, and *is set* to do evil: and besides, the weeds of corruption are carefully cherished by Satan and the world. These adversaries sow tares, and carefully promote their growth. Temptations fly thick, and diabolical influences are to indwelling sin *nearly* what Divine influences are to grace.

The spontaneous growth of nettles and thorns in uncultivated ground may be applied to corrupt Churches, as well as the hearts of the slothful. They have the seed of corruption in themselves; and without daily cultivation would soon turn wild. Never did a vineyard need such care and pains, such pruning and dressing as the Lord's. While through innate corruption the church tends to grow barren and wild; legions of enemies continually exert themselves to the utmost to reduce her to such a situation. Want of culture will always produce a great growth of error and immorality.

2. Instead of yielding fruit to the owner, they are hurtful and cumber the ground. They cannot possibly yield fruit. These are plain questions, and carry conviction, "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" and "what fruit had ye then in these things whereof ye are now ashamed?" Truly there arises no advantage to soul or body, for this world or the next, from the noxious weeds of sin, and instead of promoting, they are diametrically opposite to the glory of God.

They are positively hurtful. They cumber the ground, and occupy the place where better things might and should grow. They impoverish the soil, and make it more unfit for the reception of the seed,

and producing a crop. If any person enter the spot, they are ready to pierce and wound him. All these bad effects accompany the indulgence of sin. Sin hardens the heart, steels it against impressions, and renders it still more unfit for the reception of grace. Some sinners are *twice dead*. Once Herod heard John gladly, and did many things; but the weeds grew, and he beheaded him. Sin too, sooner or later, will bite like a serpent and sting like an adder. Scarcely is any Gospel hearer so hardened as to be altogether without qualms of conscience here: if he repents, he will know experimentally by deep contrition, that it is an evil and bitter thing to depart from the Lord: if not, he will feel to eternity the piercing pain of sin in that place where the worm dieth not.

3. Thorns and nettles are of a spreading nature. They feed themselves and fill the ground. Scarcely can any thing be conceived of such a spreading nature as sin. It contaminates the whole soul, and pervades all her faculties. It runs through the members of the body as blood through the veins, and disseminates itself through the whole conversation, and so powerfully that all the sinner's actions, not only partake of the noxious nature, but, are spreading branches of that fatal weed, the root of which is in the evil heart. In many other ways does the diffusive nature of sin discover itself. The sinner goes from one degree of sin to another, and from one kind, less atrocious or scandalous, to another still more so. The progress of sin is emphatically set before us in that gradation, Psal. i. 1, "Blessed is the man that

walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." In proportion as sin gains ground, temptations meet with less opposition, and the heart is more accessible, till the poor sinner becomes an easy prey to Satan, and is led captive by him at his will.

One thing always happens where thorns and nettles are luxuriant, and in great abundance. They become a *receptacle for wild beasts and poisonous creatures*. Should any person enter the place this increases the danger. He is not only exposed to the sharp prickle of the thorn, but the venomous bite of the creatures which nestle and lurk there. The heart of the sinner is a cage of every unclean bird, and filled with the brood of the old serpent, which is numerous, poisonous, and advancing to maturity. In a corrupt and impure church too the contagion spreads, and she waxes worse and worse. The worst of men and the most hurtful opinions find ready reception. Among nettles and thorns the foxes hide themselves, and spoil the vines. When corruption is introduced and allowed, from small beginnings it soon grows to an enormous size. The Church of Rome from less corruptions proceeded to greater, till she not only deserved, but had upon her forehead a name written "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

4. If ever the briars and nettles are rooted out, it must be difficult, troublesome, and expensive work. In the literal case this is obvious. A Gospel hearer long habituated to the practice and indulgence of

sin, if he is recovered, will feel his former sinful conduct as a heavy burden to his dying hour. Paul never forgot that he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious; and his obtaining mercy, instead of being considered as extenuating his crimes, was a glass which discovered them in their true light. After David was long in Christ, his fall broke his bones, filled his heart with contrition, and made him ever see his sin. The longer a sinner goes on in his evil ways, he has the more to repent of, and the less time for the exercise. A sinner accustomed to do evil, will reclaim himself, and “learn to do well, when the Ethiopian changes his colour, and the leopard his spots.” Nothing is too hard with God, and his grace is irresistible. His most inveterate enemies have been, and will be, made trophies of redeeming love. Such changes are impossible with men, but not with God.

Churches greatly corrupted and overspread with noxious weeds, can only be recovered by Almighty power; and when such a gracious work is accomplished, God appears in his glory. But, while it is the effect of Divine power and grace, the church will smart for her former conduct, and know in experience, that while it is more dutiful, it is easier too to *retain* than *recover* her first love. When the Lord reclaims a church from great backsliding and corruption, he commonly performs the gracious operation by throwing her into his furnace, and there refining her; and though this produces the most happy effects, it is often hard to bear it. We shall only add,

5. That if these noxious weeds are allowed to grow to the harvest, they will be cast into the fire as fit for nothing but fuel. Though the slothful man should sleep long, he must awake ; and if not sooner, surely when in hell he lifts up his eyes ! He must give an account of his vineyard, the time he had it, and all his opportunities. God, the great proprietor, will say, Give an account of thy stewardship ; and the Lord of the vineyard will come and reckon, and will certainly cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, and there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The angels will be employed as reapers, and will come with that injunction, " Gather ye together the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them." Then the soil " which brought forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, will receive blessing from God ; but that which bare thorns and briers will be rejected, and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." Then, the greater the quantity of noxious weeds, the burning will be the fiercer, and the flames the more furious. All the weeds in the sluggard's vineyard will be collected into one great heap, and the poor creature himself bound hand and foot, and placed in the midst of them, and cast into the fire which cannot be quenched. However agreeable he once thought his sleep, he will then find, that every folding of the hands to sleep was a treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. There is one obvious difference between the natural thorns, and these which grow in the vineyard of the spiritual sluggard ; *his* will retain their prickles in the fire, and instead of

losing their sharpness, will rather increase in force and power, and eternally pierce him to the heart.

Solomon also saw that "the stone wall thereof was broken down." With relation to this we shall only mention the few following things.

1. It was a full proof that the slothful man took no care of what was within. A vineyard has always been considered as valuable and important, and accordingly has been inclosed. Thus, Mark xii. 1, we read that "A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it." And the sluggard had a stone wall about his, though it was now broken down. This is necessary on many accounts. While it tends to the preservation and nourishment of the tender plants, it also preserves them from the pillaging hand of the robber, and from the destructive foot of the beast of prey. We find, Psal. lxxx. 12, that it is reckoned one of the heaviest judgments which the church can suffer when, "her hedges are broken down, so that all they who pass by do pluck her; and the boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it." If the church reckons this such a judgment from God, it surely indicates a sad want of concern in the sluggard, when he neither endeavours to preserve the wall before it fall, nor repair the breaches. "By much slothfulness the building decayeth, and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through." How careless is the sinner about his soul! Surely the heart of a slothful man is little worth! How negligent is a corrupt church about the purity of doctrine, disci-

pline, and government! Here, as in a natural wall, a small breach, if not rebuilt, soon grows larger.

2. God's law originally written on tables of stone, may justly be considered as a fence or wall placed around the sinner's vineyard. It is excellently calculated to guard the soul, and keep out beasts of prey. It points out duty, and warns against sin. It is the great rule of faith and manners, and is clothed with the highest authority. When the sinner tramples the commandment under foot, disregarding both the Divine authority and his own happiness, truly his soul is left in a defenceless situation.

It must be remembered as already mentioned, that along with the law he is also favoured with the Gospel. These, the one in subserviency to the other, constitute a complete fence. The Gospel sets a suitable remedy before him, and the law discovers his need, and, like a schoolmaster, drives him to improve it. Under the Gospel we include all the privileges and opportunities which the sinner enjoys. When the duties enjoined by the law, and the grace and love made over in the Gospel, are equally despised, the soul of the slothful is truly in a wretched and miserable situation, and justly may the stone wall be said to be broken down.

3. This wall may be said to be broken down when conscience loses its authority, and its dictates are despised. God has placed this power in the soul with a kind of Divine authority. Where the light of revelation is not enjoyed, it accuses or excuses. It has vast influence upon individuals and societies.

Nothing so much constitutes evil times as evil men, and they are greatly brought to this state by disregarding their conscience, and trampling it under foot. The way to make matters better is to enlighten and purify the conscience. Many deceive themselves, and think their conscience good, because it is quiet, and gives them no disturbance; while it, like the watchman spoken of by Isaiah, is dumb, and cannot speak. With professing Christians, conscience is not silenced all at once, but gradually. In proportion as its authority is disregarded, its injunctions and reproofs are less frequent, and have less power, till at last it becomes seared, and then the soul is without a wall or fence.

We shall only add, that when the stone wall is broken down, every enemy and temptation have easy access at any place, and may waste the vineyard at their pleasure. The soul of the sluggard is the place where Satan dwells and works. So to speak, he travels out and in at pleasure; and scarcely can any temptation be too gross when the soul is brought to this situation. Sin is no sooner suggested than complied with: duties are neglected: and eternity, and the great account which must be made to the Proprietor, are seldom, if ever, thought of. Thus he sleeps on thoughtless about, and unprovided for futurity.

When Solomon considered well the vineyard of the slothful, "*he received instruction.*" With him, we now come to inquire what lessons may be learned from this affecting subject; and among others we may observe the following,

1. That sin is most deceitful. We can scarcely conceive a more pitiful object than the sluggard, or a more disagreeable situation than his ; and yet he is greatly satisfied, much at ease, and apparently pleased and happy. No remonstrance prevails to make him change his course. Looking around us we see the slothful and careless sinner living in the neglect of almost every duty, and yet enjoying himself, and speaking peace to his own soul. Neither his present sins, nor his future reckoning gave him any disturbance.

2. The amazing patience of the great Husbandman. One cannot but be surprised that he leaves the vineyard so long in the possession of one of such a character. We would be ready to think that as soon as there was no fruit, or the least appearance of briars and thorns, it would be taken from the sluggard, and given to another. But "God is long-suffering, and slow to anger, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." His thoughts are not as ours. Though the Lord does not immediately dispossess him, he takes the most particular notice of the fruit he ought to have had, and the length of time he enjoyed his privileges, as is expressed Luke xiii. 7, he said, "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none, cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" Often the Lord is so provoked as to lay the ax to the root of the tree, and yet through the intercession of Christ, "lets" the unfruitful cumberer of the ground "alone another year, to see if he bring forth fruit."

3. The necessity of a standing ministry. Gospel ministers are labourers and vine-dressers, and watch for souls. They point out the way of salvation. They are a voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord. It is a great part of their office to awaken the slothful, and to use every mean, persuading them by the terrors of the Lord, and inviting them by the grace of the Gospel, saying, as in Ephes. iv. 15, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." They explain the Scriptures. They warn sinners, and set life and death before them, the blessing and the curse. The Lord has promised to be with them, and make them successful, and if many believe not, some will; and the election shall obtain.

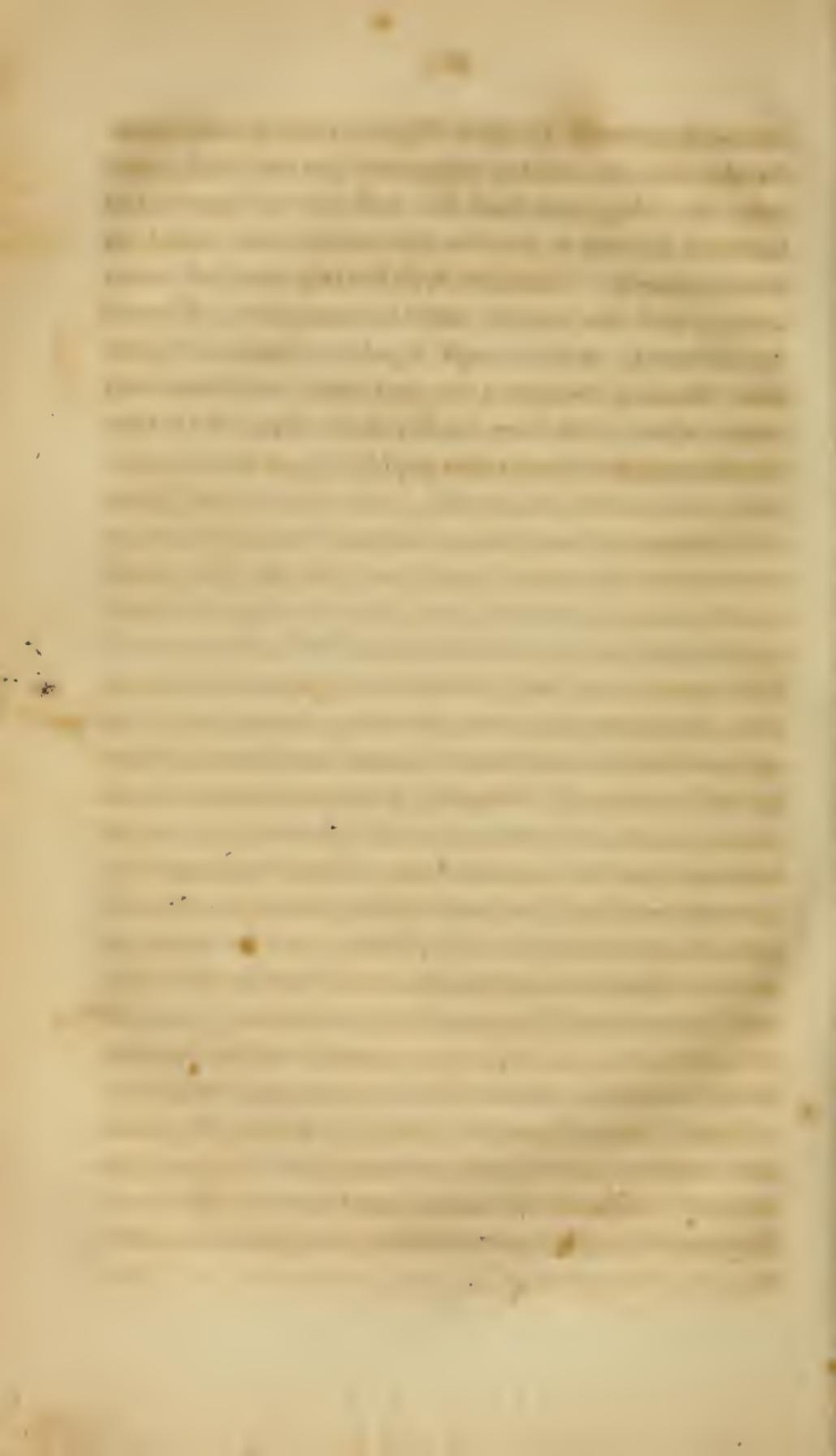
4. That under the means of grace the church and individuals will bring forth fruit of one kind or other. There is no such thing as an *empty heart*. Gospel ordinances will either be the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. There will be fruit unto sin, or unto holiness. There will either be the pleasing fruits of grace laid up for our beloved, or thorns and nettles. We have a list of each kind mentioned by the apostle, Gal. v. 19—26, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the

kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

5. The excellency of grace. What a vast difference between the sluggard and the exercised Christian! While the one is concerned about nothing but present ease, crying, "Yet a little sleep;" the other looks about him. He looks at the things that are unseen and eternal, and has his conduct influenced by them. He looks for Christ and communion with him in duties and ordinances, and listens to his voice. He looks to God in his providential procedure, sees his hand in what passes over him, and endeavours to improve every dispensation. He looks to the Holy Ghost as the great Comforter, and seeks from him all the gracious influences of which he stands in need. He looks to his own heart to see if grace flourishes and grows. He looks around him lest his adversaries come and hurt his vineyard. In one word, he is a child of the light and of the day, while the slothful is a child of the night and of darkness: he does not sleep as the sluggard, but watches and is sober.

6. That poverty is the certain consequence of sloth. In the last verse of this chapter the wise man says, "Thy poverty shall come, as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man." Poverty follows sloth as the shadow the body. It may ad-

vance apparently by slow degrees ; but it will come. At the hour of death, complete poverty will overtake the sluggard, and he will be no more able to resist it, than a person fast asleep can resist an armed enemy. Then he will be deprived of every mercy, and his misery will be complete. He will be eternally *helpless* and *hopeless*. Sinners should take warning before it be too late. " O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end ! "



SERMON XVIII.

I CORINTHIANS X. 13.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man : but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

IN whatever situation believers may be, they may lay their account with trials. They have many good things in this world ; but troubles await them as long as they are in it. The Lord in his word has made ample provision for them under the severest trials, that if their tribulations abound, their consolations may also abound. They have many and precious promises, some of which are designed for their support, others for their direction ; and all for their comfort. There are many declarations in the Scriptures intended to encourage and animate their hearts in every furnace. They are assured that “ the Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble,” and that he “ shall deliver them in six troubles ; and that in seven no evil shall touch them.” For their encouragement too, it is expressly promised that “ all things work together for good to them that

love God, and are the called according to his purpose." Under the heaviest pressures the saints have no reason to faint, for "though their outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day: for this light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Among the many passages suited to the tried saint, the text holds a distinguished place. It is replete with consolation; and though many waters should overflow him; yet faith cannot fail to derive support and encouragement from such a precious declaration. Eyeing his affliction and this text at the same time, his language will be at the lowest, "I am troubled on every side, but not distressed; I am perplexed, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed." This text, like a powerful potion, pervades and invigorates the whole man; or, like a well-fitted plaster, covers all the sore, eases the smart, and promotes the cure.

Many things prey on the heart of the Christian labouring under hard distress, to which persons at ease are entire strangers. One while, the believer poring on his calamitous situation, concludes that his case is singular; that never any sorrow was like his, and that the Lord hath "shaken him to pieces, and set him up for his mark." When downcast, and ready to faint, this text occurs to his mind, discovers his mistake, and, at least, yields him *this* comfort, that many others have been equally tried, and that his condition is by no means singular. It affords some ease to one labouring under a dangerous disease, to

see another who has been afflicted with the same trouble perfectly cured. If the same means can be procured, they may have the same effects, and he may be delivered. The text assures the believer that "there hath no temptation taken him but such as is common to man."

Again, the distressed believer poring on his condition, says, Though a thousand should have been as ill as I am, and are now delivered, I fear I never will: if their temptation has been the same with mine, their strength has been superior, for if they have borne theirs, I cannot bear mine. The text administers comfort in this case also, while it assures him that "God will not suffer him to be tempted above that he is able." He thinks if he could only be assured that he would not be tried above what he is able to bear, he would struggle with all his difficulties; but every thing seems to be against him, and unbelief insists that he has no reason for such assurance, and that all his hopes are vain. In direct opposition to unbelief, the text assures him, that he has the best ground for strong faith and consolation, for God pledges his faithfulness and veracity that he shall not fail, and while "God is faithful, he will not suffer the saint to be tempted above what he is able."

Further, the believer, still passing through fire and water, is ready to conclude that he can neither do more, nor bear longer, and that he must one day fall under the weight of temptations. Though God has mercifully supported him hitherto, he is now at his wits' end. He concludes that the Lord will be favourable no more, that his mercy appears to be clean

gone, that he has forgotten to be gracious, and that he hath in his anger shut up his tender mercies. In this situation the saint refuses comfort, and in the anguish of his heart says, My hope is lost, and I am cut off for my part: I scarcely have worse to be, and God seems almost to have done his worst: I am close shut up in depths and darksome caves, and I see no evasion for me. Like Hagar, when all her water was spent, he looks at his comforts as gone, he sits down, lifts up his voice, and weeps, and lays his account to die.

In this trying situation, God opens the eyes of the poor believer, as he did Hagar's, and shows him that the well of consolation is at hand, and points him to this text as an unfailing source of comfort, and assures him that "he will with the temptation also make way to escape." God pledges his word that, when the trial is come to the height, and would be more than the saint could bear, he will make a way to escape. He also satisfies the tried saint that even grace in his heart shall not fail, "that he may be able to bear" till the deliverance come. Often the saint was apt to think that grace in his heart, like God's mercy, was clean gone; but he shall find that it, though at the best like a small rivulet, and in the awful crisis of trial, almost quite dry, was fed with an everlasting spring.

Viewing all these parts of this text, his languishing hope begins to revive, and he encourages his heart with the pleasing thought that there may be hope in Israel concerning his condition, and that perhaps he may come off victorious. He recollects these gra-

scious words respecting Christ, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory."

In discoursing farther from these words, we shall

I. Make some observations to explain the text.

II. We shall speak of the believer's strength and ability to bear trials and temptations.

III. Illustrate that proportion which the believer's strength has to his trials, and his trials to his strength.

IV. Speak of God's with the temptation making a way to escape; after which we shall apply the subject.

I. It is first proposed to explain the text by some observations; and we observe,

1. That all believers are engaged in the same common warfare, and employed in seeking the same common salvation.

They are engaged in the same common warfare. As they were all under the first federal head, so they joined Satan's rebellion against God. Their hearts were filled with enmity; and they breathed it forth in their words and practice. The saints have got an affecting sight of their course in its wicked nature and dreadful consequences. Pardon for the past is their great desire, and the opposite conduct, through grace, their firm resolution. They have changed

sides. They have rejected their former lords, and have chosen their rightful one. In a day of Divine power, they have enlisted under Christ's banner, and his enemies are theirs, whether within or without them. These they are determined to oppose without partiality or hypocrisy, however formidable or whatever it may cost. When they entered upon the service of Christ, and resolved to follow him, they counted the cost, and still they are determined to abide by their first resolution. Though it should cost their lives, they will not yield. Through grace they are determined to be faithful to the death, animated with the hope of receiving the crown of life.

All believers are engaged in seeking the same common salvation. Jude calls it the common salvation. It is common to all Gospel hearers in respect of offer. Christ, in calling and inviting to receive it, makes no distinction, and proposes no condition. It is common to all who possess it. As their lost state by nature is the same, only the same salvation can suit them, namely, salvation from sin in all its extent. As all who enjoy it, possess it in common, they seek it from God in the use of the same means. If any thing whatever can be laid down as essential to real Christians, the things already mentioned are doubtless peculiar to them, and enter into their character. This warfare is at once the continued exercise and daily work of every believer. Much hard labour he has, especially as the work is arduous, and the opposition great and unremitted. The severity of the service is impressed in the various names by which it is designed: it is called the heat of the day, run-

ning in a race for the prize, wrestling for the mastery, fighting for the victory, &c. As the opposition is great and constant, and the crown and the prize most important; all who engage in it in earnest consider it as the most important work of life, and make it their daily exercise.

2. In this warfare Christians have the same common trials, and they who think themselves most tried meet with nothing singular or strange.

They have the same common trials. It is almost impossible to enumerate even the sources from which their trials flow. Satan's temptations have a chief place, and are the lot of every saint. They have left him, and he hates them. They have gone over to God, and have espoused his cause, which still increases Satan's malice. They have sought saving mercy and actually received it; and this fills him with rage. There is something most distressing to the Christian in Satan's temptations, whether he yields to them or not: it is most distressing to the new nature to be tempted and seduced to sin, or feel the fiery darts of that enemy, though he should resist his temptations: but if he yields to them, and meets with a partial defeat, they bite like a serpent and sting like an adder. The things about which he is tempted are in themselves most important, lie near his heart, and are attended with the most serious consequences. Desertion is also a very signal part of the Christian's trial. God hides his face, and he is troubled—and no wonder, for the hiding of God's face deprives him at once of his light and strength. Faith, when exercised, makes the be-

liever say "The Lord is my light;" but the deserted soul often walks in darkness and has no light. Like one walking under the cloud of night, he is distressed with fearful apprehensions, knows not whither he goes, and is ready to stumble and fall. This is one of the heaviest parts of the believer's trials, and is often ready to make him faint. Besides, he is always tried by the power and prevalence of sin. Sin prevailing wounds his conscience, and distresses his heart. It makes his bones, like David's, wax old through his roaring all the day long, and his moisture is turned into the drought of summer: with Paul, it makes him cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He also meets with bodily afflictions, which are many, various, and violent. Besides, every saint may lay his account with persecution in its different branches: real enemies and pretended friends will unite in reproaching him; and perhaps he may have even to resist unto blood, striving against sin.

Every adult saint meets with more or less of all these trials, though in very various degrees. Some are taken from the field of battle at the first onset, while others have to continue and bear arms for a much longer period. Some have only to shed tears, while others have to shed their blood. All who are real Christians have some degree of inward fear and outward fighting, and answer to the character of Christ's spouse—a Shulamite or company of two armies.

Putting all these things together, the believer is an object of pity. Satan tempts, sin prevails, God hides, enemies oppose and persecute, the outward man is

distressed ; and the poor believer is as much afraid for the future, as he is harassed with the past and the present. Under all these pressures he cries out, Surely my case is singular, and was there ever any sorrow like mine !

After all, he has no trial that is strange or uncommon. All these met in an eminent degree in Job's case. All God's billows and waterspouts fell upon David, and seemed to overwhelm him. Christ had all these in a still more eminent degree, and had vindictive wrath and the curse, which no saint ever experienced.

But still, the tried Christian insists that there is something singular in his case. This arises chiefly from such things as these : he knows his own heart, while he is unacquainted with the heart of every other : he knows but few believers, and only a few of those ingredients which make up their cup : they have not told him their case fully, and there is always something in it which they can tell to none but the Head : their heavy pressures make them incapable of judging with impartiality, and they commonly view their own trials through the prospect of unbelief, which both magnifies, and, like a malignant jaundice, represents them in its own colour.

3. Under these trials believers are liable to the same common discouragements. This text supposes great discouragements, and provides for them. Various are the sources from which these flow. It is disheartening to soldiers when many who have gone before them in the same warfare have fallen, especially if they are sure that they must face the same

dangers, and are exposed to the same snares. The Christian warrior trembles when he reads the history and falls of others. With the same evil heart of unbelief within, exposed to the same hardships from without, and equally unable to trust the Divine promises, he is greatly afraid and trembles. The temptations of Satan, and the power of unbelief, would be enough of themselves to discourage the strongest believer; but how hard must it be for him, when inward desertion and outward distress are measured out at the same time! These tend to fix guilt upon the soul, and represent God as searching out sin and contending. When Satan and unbelief come to the Christian in this situation they find him pressed down, and their work more than half done. Under such an assemblage of difficulties he greatly feels his own weakness, and is ready to conclude that he can neither perform the least duty, or bear the least trial. No wonder if in such a situation he be discouraged, and cry, I am near to halt; I fear I shall never see the desired haven; I have washed my hands in vain; I am afflicted, and ready to die from my youth up.

4. While believers are exposed to these trials and discouragements, their common Head interests himself in their support and happiness. He is no unconcerned observer, and his eye is never off them. This is evidently implied in these words, "God will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." He knows the precise degree of trial which has been already measured out, and how much more they could bear. He takes the most particular and careful notice of their situation and feelings. God is

interested in the persons of his people. He has bought them; they are adopted into his family, born of his Spirit, and the good work is begun. He is interested in the warfare. It is the war of God against Satan, and he has enlisted the Christian under his banner. He is also interested in the issue of it, that it may be for his glory and praise. His heart and hand are in all the trials which the believer meets with. He either determines or permits them. Every Christian may use the language of Job, "He performeth the thing that is appointed for me." The sufferings of the great Head were determined, and so are those of all the members. Though trials should flow immediately from the malice of Satan, or the opposition of the world, or any other second cause; still God has his hand in them. His heart too is in them. Every trial is comprehended in his great purpose of love, and also in that leading promise, "all things shall work together for good." Very different are the designs of God and the Christian's enemies in the same trial. His enemies intend either to harass, ruin, or devour him; but God expressly designs to try his grace, to exercise and increase it. He designs too to purge from sin, and wean from the world; conform to Christ, and meeten for glory. In this manner did Joseph reason, when comforting his brethren about their former conduct after his father's death, Gen. l. 20, "As for you ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive."

5. The Lord's people have the same common support and encouragement set before them in his

promises and faithfulness. His faithfulness is expressed, which must imply his promises. The saint when tried can never take encouragement from himself. He is weak, and his enemies are many and strong, deceitful and malicious. Like David he encourages himself in the Lord, and especially in his promises. Every thing about these evinces that they are both designed, and calculated for his encouragement. They were given without any solicitation, and of God's good-will recorded in the word. They are numerous, and suited to every condition. They are the strong man's meat, and cordials to the sick. They are the condemned sinner's pardon, and the justified person's passport to the far country. The greater part of them are expressly addressed to the tried and tempted soul; and none can apply unto them without finding them suitable to his own case, whether he be afflicted, tempted of Satan, or deserted of God.

Divine faithfulness is engaged for the performance of all these promises, and is particularly encouraging to the tried saint. God hath spoken in his holiness, and all the promises are yea and amen in Christ, and ratified by his blood. The sins of his people did not prevent his giving the promises, though he knew them then as well as after they are committed; and they never can hinder the accomplishment of them in their due time and order. God is able to accomplish all his promises; and he is of one mind and changes not.

Thus, though hills should be cast into the midst of the sea; though Providence should wear a frowning

aspect: and the world seem to go to wreck; the believer has sufficient encouragement that he shall be safe here; and hereafter see the desired haven: for faithful is he that hath promised, and there will be an accomplishment of the things spoken by the Lord. Therefore, in every hurricane and tempest, the believing soul should fix the eye of faith in the Divine promise, cast another within the vail, and weather out the storm. The Divine promise and faithfulness supported Abraham in that great trial of his faith, Rom. iv. 18—21, “Against hope he believed in hope, and being not weak in faith, he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. The cloud of witnesses mentioned Heb. xi. performed the arduous work, and endured the severe trials there recorded, “in and by faith.” They derived all their encouragement and support from the faithfulness of God pledged in his promises.

6. All the trials of believers, without a single exception, have one common measure, which they never did and never shall exceed, which is *what they are able to bear*. Many may have less than they could bear; but never one had more. Many under their trials have feared or apprehended that they would not be able to bear them; but never one actually fainted or gave up. In the beautiful language of Isaiah, “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even

the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but 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; and they shall walk, and not faint." A wise and merciful Lord proportions the trials to the strength, and the strength to the trials. He fits the shoulders for the burden, and, as the great burden bearer, he carries both the person and his burden. If either outward afflictions or inward fear, the wrath of men or devils, should at any time border on being too much for the Christian, the Lord interposes. He does with trials of every kind, as Asaph says concerning the wrath of man, Psal. lxxvi. 10, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

If Christians would desire to know what proportion of trials they could bear, or how much; we shall only make the two following answers at present. They can bear little, very little or nothing, far below their expectation, if they take the burden on themselves: they can bear much, very much, far above their expectation, if they cast their burden on the Lord, and are supported by the everlasting arms underneath them. Experience shows that the believer often bears the heaviest trial best; because he sees at once that it is above his own strength, and directly employs Christ. Many instances of this might be adduced; but we shall only say that often the very thoughts of death before hand have made the Christian tremble more than the great change itself.

What a source of comfort in every situation is that precious promise, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be!"

7. Believers shall at last all share in the same common deliverance. "God will make a way to escape." Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. The Lord works gradual and often very great deliverances for them in this world, according to his precious promise, Isai. lvii. 16, "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made." And at death he gives them full and complete deliverance. It will be said hereafter of tried saints without exception, "These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them into living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. vii. 14.

That all believers without exception shall escape, is the universal doctrine of Scripture. Christ himself expressly asserts it, John x. 28, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and none

is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." In heavy trials Christians would faint if they did not believe; but Christ prays for them that their faith may not fail. His intercession secures strength and support under every pressure, and final deliverance. The Spirit of Christ dwells in them as a well of living water springing up to everlasting life, and as he supplies them in the way, he will bring them at last to God, the fountain of living waters. We have the universal testimony of the saints themselves. They all agree in asserting, that none perish who put their trust in God. In the Christian warfare, as Christ has conquered in his person, he must and will be victorious in his members. He must have the honour of a complete victory, and Satan and every enemy must be completely defeated.

We shall only add, that believers should hold on in the great common cause without decline, despondency, or dismay. Whatever their trials may be, they ought never to *decline*. By turning back, matters may be worse, but never can be better. If they are ready to faint, they should believe. Faith always inclines to hold on in the Christian course, and never to turn back. If they find their strength failing, they have only to look to him in whom all fulness dwells, and it shall be renewed. They should not *despond*. They have always reason to say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God: yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be

with me." The most discouraging events, which the Lord's people meet with, are designed not to weaken or lessen their faith, but exercise and increase it. They should not be *dismayed*. Every Christian warrior has reason to say with David, "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about; for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone:" or as in another Psalm, "All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them. They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the Lord helped. The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation."

II. We proceed to speak of the believer's ability to bear trials and temptations.

It is not in themselves. They are like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. When they begin the Christian warfare, they are said to be without strength. When bearing the burden and heat of the day, their constant cry is, We have no might against this great company, and they know in their comfortable experience that when they are weak then are they strong, and their strength is God alone. Repeated experiments prove that, in themselves, they are wholly insufficient for the performance of duty or bearing any trial. When they lean to their own strength, they are disappointed; but they can do all things through Christ strengthening them.

1. The strength of the saints is the special or saving grace of God. This invigorates the mind for the various duties and trials in the Christian life. It makes worm Jacob thresh the mountains, and beat them small; and make the hills as chaff. Paul, after a singular manifestation, had very sharp trials. He fell on his knees and cried for Divine strength. God said, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." The strength of the Redeemer's grace was displayed in the apostle's weakness. By Divine grace, which is the believer's strength, is understood God's implanting and increasing his own image, consisting in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, according to his purpose of grace. This both inclines and enables the saint to oppose sin and every other spiritual enemy, and serve the Lord.

2. They are wholly indebted to Christ for it. The Lord looked upon us, considered our weakness, and provided strength. He did not make this provision because he saw us worthy of it, or from a foresight that we would do any thing to deserve it; but of his own good will. We are indebted to Christ for all our strength in different respects. It comes through his cross. We raised insurmountable difficulties, and no blessing could have been conferred upon us without full satisfaction to Divine justice, and this Christ made on his cross, and there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in him. It is lodged in his person. The first Adam was entrusted with our stock, and squandered it. According to the glorious plan of the covenant of grace, it hath pleased

God that all fulness should dwell in Christ. It is lodged in him to be communicated according to the situation of every believer. This is plainly asserted by the apostle in his comfortable address to the Philippians: "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus."

It is impossible to name all the ways in which Christ strengthens the soul. As our propitiation, he has opened our access to God, and made us as if we had not been cast off. As our advocate, he prays for every blessing, and that we may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. As our King, he commands our strength. He gives us the support which is requisite for duty, and animates us by the hope of a future crown. He holds the soul in his hand and communicates strength; and his presence overawes every enemy. Wherever he comes he is a *present* aid. At his call the weakest saint can walk on the waters; and the stormy wind and roaring waves are hushed at his word.

3. The strength of believers is dispensed by the Holy Spirit. He opens their eyes, discovers their need, and helps them to cry for it with groanings which cannot be uttered. He makes the lame man to leap as an hart, and go from strength to strength in his journey to the heavenly Canaan. He alone convinces of our natural weakness, and leads us to the blood of Christ as our satisfaction and atonement; and it is no small part of our strength to see that God is well pleased with sinners in Christ. Having impressed us with a sense of our own weakness, he leads us to Christ as the head of saving and sanctify-

ing influences. As a signal part of his communication of strength, he maintains on the souls of believers a deep sense of their own weakness and absolute need of Christ; and thus leads them habitually to improve the Saviour, in whom alone is lodged their strength for duty and difficulty. The Holy Spirit actually imparts strength, though often imperceptibly. He comes down as the rain and dew, and communicates his strengthening influences, here a little, and there a little.

4. This strength is set before us in the Divine promise, and actually received by faith. It is a blessing of the covenant of grace, and is contained in the promises. In many places it is promised, for instance, Zechariah x. 12, "And I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord," and in Isai. xli. 10, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right-hand of my righteousness." Every promise of strength is equal security to the believer that he shall not fail, as if he were almighty. He may feel his own weakness, and apprehend that he is ready to faint; but he shall be strong in the Lord. Duty and trial may appear above his ability, but turning his eye to God and his promise, he will understand experimentally the meaning of these beautiful words, "All things are possible to him that believeth."

It is actually received by faith. This grace itself is the strength of the soul, and especially as it leads from all dependance on ourselves or any creature.

It improves the strength of God set before us in his word. The language of the believing soul, is "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation." The more the saint feels his own inability, he looks the more to the promise; and being strengthened one time after another, he adopts as his own that language, Isai. xxv. 4, "For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when a blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." Thus led on gradually he says with the apostle, "When I am weak, then I am strong." Faith engages God and his all-sufficiency for the believer's support, and makes him say, "Our sure and all-sufficient help is in Jehovah's name." There is real strength in the promises, and faith actually improves it. With great propriety is it called resting and leaning upon God, and a taking hold of *his* strength. We know what it is for a strong man to help a weaker to perform a journey: the Lord strengthens all his people in their journey to the land of promise.

5. This strength is eminently obtained in prayer. Every saint, like Jacob, prevails as he weeps and makes supplication. It has been the universal experience of them all, that, when they cried, then their enemies turned back. Great is the influence of prayer. It engages Divine wisdom and strength. Difficulted and at his wits' end, the believer bends the knee and pours out his heart to God, and often comes away no more sad, but strong in the Lord. As his needs recur he applies to the same quarter,

and his strength is renewed. The most frequent application to God, and the greatest communications of Divine strength, never make him stronger in himself or give him any stock of his own. He will always be found the strongest believer who is most sensible of his own weakness, makes the most fervent application to the throne of grace, and has all his dependence on the Divine promise.

After all, the believer's strength to perform duty, and bear trials, though a great reality, is a great mystery; perhaps the greatest in experimental religion. He does not understand it fully himself; and far less can he explain it to another. The most he can say is, "I find myself unable for every thing; I am often at the point of giving up, and am near to halt; a thousand times I have thought I would fall before mine enemies; all refuge failed me, and like Peter, I was about to sink; my needs were many and great, and my pressures very heavy: in this weak and forlorn situation I thought about the promises, and cried to the Lord, I cannot tell how, but somehow I was helped and got over that trial: in like cases I followed the same course, and with the same success; and to the praise of Divine grace I have ground to say, *Ebenezer*, hitherto hath the Lord helped me: from this I would fain conclude that in time coming the Lord will be to me *Jehovah-jireh*; and I resolve that I will constantly go on in the strength of God the Lord." Leaving a more full application till afterward, we shall conclude with these reflections.

1. This subject points out to every believer what his lot and situation in the world are likely to be. He may lay his account with trials. Tribulation, as well as peace and a kingdom, is an article in Christ's legacy. Respecting trials, we would call the believer *not to decline them*. There is a selfishness natural to men which disposes them to put the cup of affliction by them if they can. We might ask the saint, If you had it at your will, would you desire to be wholly free of troubles, or at any rate of great troubles? Would you take that way which infinite wisdom does not judge best? Would you choose a way opposite to, and different from, what Christ himself walked in, and which is not marked with the footsteps of the flock? Upon serious thought, would you not rather take up the cross which God gives you, and follow Christ? Determine with yourselves and be decided. While we would call the believer not to decline his trials, we would also call him *to put no harsh constructions on them*. If trials were evidences of God's hatred and anger, his dearest saints would be the most hated. On the contrary, they are tokens of adoption and sonship, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not. But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." The Lord intends them all for good. He has gracious ends to accomplish by every trial; and if the believer is in heaviness through manifold temptations, there is a *need be*.

2. As this subject warns us of trials, it also points out provision and comfort. The Christian's strength will be equal to all his trials, and superior to all opposition. He shall not be tried above what he is able. He shall hold on his way conquering every enemy, performing every duty, and bearing every trial, till he come to Zion. He shall never fall away totally or finally. Grace and strength proportioned to his duties and trials, secure his perseverance.

3. From this subject we may infer, that believers have need of faith and patience. They need faith to enable them to believe that God does all things well, all in holiness and wisdom: that he does all well even when he permits the church and *themselves* to groan under the greatest pressures and tribulations. It is not enough to believe that he did well to former saints when he tried them; but we must believe well of our own trials, even before we see the issue. Every saint reads with pleasure Abraham's trial about his son, and Mordecai's, when he and his people were likely to fall before Haman—because they turned out so well. Do you believe as well about your own trial which is not yet ended? These two believed before the issue. Are your trials greater than theirs? Is deliverance more unlikely? Is the Lord's arm shortened?

They have need of patience—to submit to what the Lord measures out—as good—as best; and neither murmur nor repine. Without faith the saints would stumble at their cross, and without patience they would faint, and weary under it.

SERMON XIX.

1 CORINTHIANS X. 13.

There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

WE have already made some observations to open up the text, and spoken of the believer's ability to bear trials and temptations. We now proceed, as was proposed, to

III. Speak of that proportion which the trials of believers have to their strength, and which their strength has to their trials, when a faithful God pledges his word that "he will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able." On this we observe these things.

1. There is a proportion of quantity. Every Christian shall have as much strength as is requisite for the performance of the duties to which he is called, and the trials which are measured out to him. God has said they shall be able, and he will not prove worse than his word. Is the saint called to perform

very arduous duties wholly above any power of his own? the strength set before him in the promise is sufficient. The precepts of the law, prescribing duty, and laying him under obligation to perform, are no doubt great; but the promises of the Gospel are equally great. Has he heavy trials and crosses, enemies strong and mighty, has he snares too deep and artfully laid for him to discover and shun; the strength promised is proportioned to them all. Is he called to work out his own salvation: by grace he is saved. The gracious strength which God has promised may be compared to the manna: he who needs and gathers much will have nothing over; and the discouraged saint, who apprehends that he has gathered little, will have no lack. Among men what would be altogether beyond the power of one, is perfectly easy to another, owing to his superior strength. What would be too much for one saint is easy for another. There are babes in Christ who are not yet able for the duties or trials which young men can bear or perform, because as John says, "They are strong, and the word of God abideth in them, and they have overcome the wicked one." The saint, when entering on the Christian warfare, finds many things hard for him, which are more easy at an advanced period. Christ trains his people and inures them to hardships as they can bear them. He once said to his disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." In a similar manner, he treats all his saints, and does not overdrive them; but leads them on as they can bear.

2. There is a proportion of fitness and suitableness. Divine strength made over in the promise is wonderfully adapted to the necessities of the Christian. When the soul receives and improves it, duties become congenial to the heart. Nothing can be more unsuitable to the unrenewed heart than the performance of duties in a proper manner; but grace changes the heart, casts it into the mould of the Gospel, and produces a fitness for every duty: and the more grace the believer receives from the fulness of Christ, his heart is filled in proportion. Grace makes him delight in calling upon God, and stirs him up to be fervent and importunate in this exercise. It fits him for reading or hearing the Lord's word. It opens the heart to receive Divine instruction, and gives it an abiding influence. It makes the arduous duty of self-examination pleasant. It opens up the secrets of the heart, and enables the conscience to act with propriety, and judge without partiality. In meditation, it fixes the attention, and kindles the sacred flame. So suitable is the strength in the promise to duties, that it makes them the Christian's element, and it is his meat and his drink to do the will of his heavenly Father. It equally fits him to encounter every enemy. It arms him for the battle, inspires him with courage, and makes him valiant in the fight. Though his enemies compass him like bees, in this strength he destroys them. While human sagacity could never discover the plots and wiles of his enemies, grace apprises of the danger, and either makes a way to escape, or points out sufficient aid. This strength is so suited for making the believer oppose his

enemies, that it may at once be called his armour, and ability to wield it. It fits him for bearing afflictions. It comforts his heart under them, makes them sit easy and light upon him, and causes them to promote his best interest. It makes the hottest fire refining, the deepest waters healing, and the waters of Marah sweet.

3. There is a proportion of duration. No man can promise upon the continuance of outward strength for a single moment. What he can now perform with ease, may soon be entirely beyond his power. It is quite otherwise with the believer. With the greatest safety, he may promise upon spiritual strength to his dying hour, and ought to do it. He has the best warrant for this in the Lord's promise. Duties will continue in constant succession while he lives, and he ought to die in obedience to the will of God, "*so doing.*" Temptations and afflictions too will be his lot while in this world; but he shall have strength to bear the one, and oppose the other. Many are the promises which secure continued strength and support. God hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. For the Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance. And we may be confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ—for this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." The promise is always equally replete with strength, and the saint has equal access to it every hour.

What an unfailing spring of consolation and encouragement are those gracious words, Isai. liv. 10, "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee!" That strength which conducted the saint through this waste and howling wilderness, will also support him in the swellings of Jordan, and administer an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

While the believer's strength continues as long as he has any need, it is dispensed by the Lord with wonderful propriety, and in the best season. He waits that he may be gracious. Often the season in which the saint receives strength discovers the watchful care of God over him, and, as well as the strength, becomes matter of praise. It is never given till necessary, and never delayed beyond the best time. Often God bestows it when the believer is brought very low; and every saint is well acquainted with these words, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble: God shall help, and that right early."

4. It is a proportion eminently glorifying to God. Every thing respecting the saints proclaims his glory. This is the great end for which they were redeemed. The Lord says, "This people have I for myself; they shall show forth my praise." He receives a remarkable revenue of glory from the proportion between their trials and their strength. Angels now take particular notice of the heirs of salvation, nar-

rowly inspect them in every part of the Christian warfare, and praise God for that proportion. So far as the saints know it, they also praise him. In heaven they will understand it perfectly, and give him complete and endless praise. It is eminently for the honour of his wisdom to adjust every circumstance in their lives, and make their strength exactly correspond to their wants. He knows all their trials, and the exact proportion of strength which they need. It is also for the honour of his love, care, and pity. He pitieth them under every trial; and the more they are tried, the more are they the objects of his care and pity. His power too will be glorified in giving such strength to his people as enables them to bear their greatest and sharpest conflicts. Nothing short of Divine power could either support them in or deliver them from trials. When a weak instrument performs mighty actions, it glorifies the hand that holds it. When believers have outward fightings and inward fears, when they labour under bodily affliction, wrestle against principalities and powers, and bear all this accumulation of distress without fainting, or even much complaining, it glorifies the unseen hand which supports them.

5. This proportion is absolutely certain. God has pledged his word and oath that his people shall have the strength which they need. His simple word is infinitely sure, but that we might have a strong consolation he has added his oath. These are two immutable things; and heaven and earth shall sooner pass away than believers meet with trials above that they are able to bear. Having such grounds to go

upon, we should believe this proportion, and take the comfort of it, even before we have fully experienced it. We should trust in the Lord, and this would be the way to have our hearts helped. The better we bode at God's hand, and the more we trust his promises, the surer will our help be, and the sooner it will come.

We shall only add, that the saints in every age have borne honourable testimony to this truth, that God did not suffer them to be tempted above what they were able to bear. Under the Old Testament, they sung, "I was brought low, and the Lord helped me." Under their heaviest trials, they had reason to say, when "my foot slippeth, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up: in the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul." Many of them endured the heaviest trials. "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins, and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Under the New Testament, the saints began to praise the Lord for this strength, saying, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." They too endured extreme sufferings, and gloried in tribulation. Since the canon of Scripture was completed they have borne testimony to the same truth on death-beds and gibbets. They have finished their course with joy, proclaiming to the praise of God and the comfort of others, "that not one thing hath failed which the Lord their God spake concerning them; all are come

to pass, and not one thing hath failed thereof." We go on to

IV. Make some observations concerning God, with the temptation, making a way to escape.

1. Often trials and temptations meet in such an assemblage, and come to such an height, that the poor believer is persuaded he can neither bear more nor longer, and he can neither see nor conceive any way of escape. Many trials are often measured out to him at the same time. There is nothing in which Satan takes more pleasure than to join with God in trying the saint; though their designs differ almost as widely as their natures. When both the outward and inward man are tried, and for a considerable length of time, it is little wonder the Christian thinks an escape almost impossible, and that God can scarcely interpose for him. In this situation he adopts the desponding language of Israel, Isai. xl. 27, "My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God." Then the mind is filled with anxiety, and the heart overwhelmed and in perplexity. Then his sorrow and difficulty resemble those of the Redeemer, when, labouring under the weight of sin imputed to him, and bearing the wrath of God, he cried out, John xii. 27, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." Were the experience of others as well known as David's, it would be found a common complaint with the saint, "I am sore vexed, but thou, O Lord, how long." Now his soul is cast down within

him, and he is often ready to faint. He roars out in the bitterness of his spirit. He attempts duties, and not finding the deliverance he expected, he thinks about giving them over, saying with Asaph, "I have washed my hands in vain." If he did not find comfort in duties, still less in giving them up; and he tries them anew. Now he can say, I looked to my right-hand observing duties; and to my left not caring for them; and all refuge failed me. God's billows pass over me, I fear matters will never be better, and that I shall never find a way to escape.

2. God can preserve his people under heavy trials, and keep them from sinking, much longer than they could have believed. When trials are very hard, and when the present feeling is aggravated by unbelieving conjectures about the future, the tried saint apprehends he can hold out no time. Present deliverance or death is with him the only alternative. He cries, Give me deliverance or I die. This is the believer's hour of darkness. His present sad feeling darkens his past experience, and makes him forget what God has done for his soul. Unbelieving and desponding apprehensions obscure the future, and hide from his view what God can or will do. If a promise occurs to his mind, he either discredits it, or claims no interest in it. Sometimes he is so tried that he hardly thinks there can be a worse situation, death and hell scarcely excepted. Then he is ready to conclude that he is as much past remedy, or nearly so, as those who are actually dead. He says, as in Ezekiel xxxvii. 11, "My bones are dried, and my hope is lost; I am cut off for my part:" or with Da-

vid, Psal. cii. 3—5, “My days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burnt as an hearth. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin.” Then he sees no possibility of escape.

God sees not as man. All this time his hand is about the believer secretly strengthening and supporting him. As it is the saint’s hour of darkness, it is signally the hour of God’s fatherly care. In this hot contest he is not unconcerned. His promise and grace are more at stake than the believer’s credit and salvation. He has cast his jewels into the furnace to refine them, and he stands close by to see that nothing be consumed but rust and corruption. The saint thinks he shall perish, but God’s thoughts are not like his. Had the tried believer, whose case we are describing, seen a bush all on fire, he would have thought it impossible that it could have been preserved. Every saint is a branch of that bush, and Christ is the root. Like the unruly tongue, though in a different sense, it is set on fire of hell. The world and the flesh increase the fuel, blow the fire, and do all they can to consume the bush: but neither the bush itself nor a single branch shall ever be consumed. What cannot HE do, whose name and memorial is a wonder-working God!

3. However impossible deliverance may appear to the saint under his heavy pressures, God knows how to deliver, and will make a way to escape. The poor believer has long pored on his case, and considered it in every possible view, and deliverance

seems in his eye almost impossible. He cannot even apprehend how God can deliver. Nay, sometimes under the force of temptation he apprehends either that God does not know him, or that he takes no notice of him. He concludes, if God knew such an object of pity, his mercy would dispose him to grant deliverance. The Lord knoweth them that are his. He set them apart in his eternal purpose, and in time imprinted his image on their hearts. He knows their every pressure. His address to the church of Smyrna applies to every saint, "I know thy tribulation." No ingredient in their affliction is hid from his omniscient eye. The lion's den could not hide Daniel, nor the whale's belly conceal Jonah from his watchful eye. He visits the lonely cottage, and "will strengthen the believer on his bed of languishing, and will make all his bed," however coarse, "in his sickness." He is attentive to all the groans and sighs of his people under their trouble. He heard Ephraim bemoaning himself; and every saint may say, "Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee." Not a single sigh heaved from the believer's heart can escape Divine notice, though it should be crowded with the sighs of thousands, more than the woman's believing touch escaped the notice of Christ, "when a multitude thronged and pressed him." As he knows every ingredient in the trial, he also knows *a way to escape*. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation." His infinite wisdom knows every possible way of escape, and always fixes on that which is best. What his wisdom contrives, his power can ac-

comply, and his love renders absolutely sure. He knows the fittest season for deliverance; and when he wills it is done. "There is no wisdom or counsel against the Lord."

4. The way which the Lord makes to escape is commonly when the trial is at the greatest height. "*With the temptation* (in its greatest force) he makes a way to escape." There are chiefly two ways of *outgate* from very heavy trials: the one is, when the trial is removed from the person: the other, when the person is removed from the trial. Often when trials have come to the greatest pitch a merciful Lord has removed them, and said to them as to the waves of the sea, Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, as in the case of Job and many others: on the other hand, in the extremity of trial he has taken the suffering saint to himself. Once, said a Christian in great distress, "I know not how I can endure this night!" The God of his mercy prevented him. His fears were disappointed. Death closed his eyes and ended his trials! When the storm and the wolf threaten the destruction of the sheep, the tender-hearted shepherd gathers them into the fold!

It is the universal doctrine of the Scriptures, that deliverance *commonly* comes when the trial is at the worst, and that the Lord delivers when there are none shut up or left. They contain many examples of remarkable interpositions in a time of extremity. A ram was caught in the thicket when Isaac was bound. Jacob wrestled, and the Lord changed his brother's heart. When Pharaoh pursued Israel, the Red Sea was dried up, and they marched through

the flood on foot. David's history is almost a constant succession of signal interpositions, when reduced to the greatest extremity. "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me, to tell of Gideon and Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthai, of Samuel also, and the prophets."

5. If either the greatness or continuance of trials would tend to overthrow the saint, before God's time of deliverance come, a secret support *shall* be given him "that he may be able to bear." God "strengthens the fainting soul with strength inwardly." The Lord has several ways of supporting his people under their trials till deliverance come, which are recorded in the Scriptures for their encouragement. Such is the fulness of the Scriptures, and the examples there mentioned so apposite, that we can scarcely suppose any saint can meet with a trial, or need a deliverance not exemplified in them: but should such a case happen, God's love and faithfulness would lead him to *create* a way sooner than any of his people should perish. As we have many miraculous deliverances recorded in the sacred volume, the Lord has often wonderfully interposed since the period when inspiration ceased. His love to, and care about, his people are unchanging. The true way for the tried saint is to fix his eye on God's promise of deliverance, his absolute faithfulness, and unchanging love; and to overlook those methods which seemed probable and rational in his own eye, and leave the manner and season of deliverance and escape wholly to God. The Divine declaration about deliverance should be considered by him as sufficient ground of faith and

consolation in the heaviest trial, even when he sees no way to escape. We shall now subjoin some application.

1. This subject sets before us the sure ground on which faith may and should rest concerning support under trials, and a way to escape from them. It has the testimony of the great and infallible Jehovah, that he will not suffer his people to be tempted above that they are able to bear. His testimony is more stable than mountains of brass. Every thing relating to it deserves credit, and is encouraging to faith. If God had not purposed that saints should never be tried above what they are able to bear, there was no obligation on him to say it. Now when he has said it, there is nothing to hinder the accomplishment, but every thing to secure and bring it about. He has every trial at his disposal; and to secure his own veracity, he may measure out more or fewer as they are able to bear. He has all store of grace, and he may, can, and will dispense more or less according to their trials. He is the same as when he made this declaration; and having made it, he is under super-added obligation to make it good. Faith stands on firm ground, and believers should not stagger.

2. We may infer the great evil of unbelief. God says, we shall not suffer above that we are able to bear; unbelief says, I can neither bear nor endure any longer. He says, my grace is sufficient for thee; it says, grace may be sufficient for others, but not for me. He says, he does all things well; it replies, though he did his worst, I could be little worse. God says, all his ways are truth and mercy; unbelief

says, I am plagued and chastened every day, and his mercy seems clean gone. He says, wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; it replies, this evil is of the Lord, why should I wait for the Lord any longer. Thus it calls the God of truth a liar, and who can determine the quantity of evil included in this sin?

3. We may see how unreasonable and criminal despondency is. How does it appear in the light of this text? It joins deliberate obstinacy to unbelief. It argues in its own behalf, justifies itself, and refuses consolation. In opposition to despondency we might ask, Has not God answered all his people's expectations in time past? Is there any reason to conclude, or even suppose, that he will not do the same in time coming? The following question deserves a serious consideration: When will despondency in the tried believer be justifiable? We might answer, Never while this text is in the Bible; or till God has forgot it; or is not able to accomplish it; or when any proof can be adduced that he has neglected it.

4. After all, we may see that the Lord's people have good reason cheerfully to leave this world, and die when God shall be pleased to call them. Vanity is wrote in legible characters on every sublunary object, and all below is vexation of spirit. This is a world of sorrows and miseries. Sin has embittered our best enjoyments. We should not be overfond of our sorrows. When we go hence we shall leave them all behind. In the grave the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. In heaven all our tears will be wiped away, and there will be

nothing to hurt or destroy. This is a strange land. Heaven is our Father's house and our own home. At its best, this world is but a valley of tears and a place of weeping. In the other we enter into rest and our joy is full. Why should we prefer troubles, sorrows, and difficulties, to everlasting rest and complete joy? True, death is between; but it will soon be over, and there is no by-road to bliss.

This subject might be further improved by earnestly calling Gospel hearers to examine themselves.

We need not ask you if you have had trials, for man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards; nor if you will have them afterward, as death is before you: but we may and should ask, how you improve them. Do you see God's hand in every trial, or do you not? Do you murmur, or are you resigned? Are you humbled, or is your neck like an iron sinew?

But what we have chiefly in our eye is to ask, Are you possessed of that proportion of strength spoken of in the text? The following things will perhaps enable you to answer with some certainty and precision. If you are, you will see it to be all of grace, and not of works, and from the heart you will say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory for thy mercy's sake." If you are sensible of your own weakness, you will ardently desire an increase of it: desiring this increase, you will come to God, as the source of all grace and strength—to Christ, as having it all lodged in his person—to his cross, as what alone procures it—to the promises, as at once the security and vehicle of

conveyance—and to the Holy Spirit, who alone can actually confer it: and coming in this manner you will fervently pray, “Lord, increase our faith.” Once more, if you are possessed of that strength, the power of sin will be broken and declining. As the house of David grows stronger, the opposing interest waxes weaker; and you will be learning to die to sin daily. Time was when you were driven before corruption as chaff before the wind; but now you make at least some stand.

Deeply concerned, a certain believer objects, and says with tears, “My corruptions are so strong, and I feel them working in such a vigorous manner, that if this be an evidence of that proportion of strength, I fear I am still without it.” To this we may answer, though you feel corruptions within strong and lively, and though you cannot say you have conquered them; yet if you hate and oppose them, you are possessed of this strength: one cannot begin the Christian warfare without some measure of that Divine strength which will make them more than conquerors at last. Still the believer objects, “I have so little strength to oppose the body of sin, and in combating my spiritual enemies, I am so often repulsed, and at the best gain so little ground, that I am afraid I have not the strength spoken of in the text.” To this we would say, if you have a love to it, a desire for it; if the thought of wanting it pains you at the heart, and makes you cry fervently to God for it, you are not an entire stranger to it. People never ardently seek that of which they are totally ignorant; and the living, and not the dead, are pained at the heart.

Another still objects, and says, "Some how or another with great difficulty, greater than I can tell, I continue unto this day; but really I do not think I can endure any longer." The best answer to this objection is to sum up the amount of it, and it is as follows: A gracious and good Lord has supported me for these twenty, thirty, or forty years; but I think I can be supported no longer: during that time I was very weak; but still I continued: now it is all over. I would ask you, Can an almighty God do *no more* at all?

Before concluding this discourse, we would offer some directions to saints who either are under trials now or have reason to expect them. Be well established in the truth of this and such texts, where God promises to give strength in proportion to every trial. Having God's testimony, let neither sin nor Satan weaken your faith. On God's promises you may stand as on an impregnable rock. When your trials abound, compare them with the glory that shall be revealed, and which in a little you shall fully possess; trials are short, and future happiness is without end. Think much on the great influence which present tribulations have on the future crown. They work a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Rest will always be found sweet after great hardships and severe labour. Be much in prayer, and try to possess your souls in patience. Never forget that when you are toiling and suffering on earth, Christ is interceding in heaven. Your trials in a little will all be over, and then you shall remember all the way the Lord hath led you, with joy and satisfaction.

We shall now address sinners. Whatever may be your situation, while out of Christ you are truly miserable, and objects of pity. Though you should have health and plenty, and all the happiness that this world can afford; there is a canker that lies at the root of all your enjoyments that makes you dissatisfied, restless, and impatient. There neither is nor can be peace to the wicked. You are cursed in your basket and store. The saint, oppressed and loaded with trials, is a happy person, compared with you. If on the other hand you have trials, you have no strength to bear them. The curse will weigh you down, and your own conscience will torment you. If it is difficult to bear your present troubles, how “can your heart endure or hands be strong in the day when the Lord shall deal with you?” You ought to think much about the torments of hell, and be warned to fly from the wrath to come. Be persuaded to come to Christ. He invites you. He requires no previous qualification. He came to save the chief of sinners, and he beseeches such to be reconciled. Coming to him, all the grace and strength which God promises, and the saints possess, will be yours. They are yours in the offer. Faith will put you in actual possession. Improving Christ you will sing at last with the believer, “My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.” But if you will not come to Christ, your present sufferings, however great, will be only the beginning of sorrows, “for lo, they that are far from God shall perish.”

The first part of the book is devoted to a general
 introduction to the subject of the history of
 the world, and to a description of the various
 systems of government which have prevailed
 in different ages and countries. The author
 then proceeds to a more particular account
 of the history of the world, beginning with
 the first ages, and continuing to the present
 time. The history is divided into three
 parts, the first of which is the history of
 the world from the beginning to the
 establishment of the Christian religion, the
 second is the history of the world from
 the establishment of the Christian religion
 to the present time, and the third is the
 history of the world from the present time
 to the end of the world. The author
 has taken great pains to collect and
 digest the materials of history, and to
 present them in a clear and concise
 manner. The book is well adapted for
 the use of schools, and for the general
 reader. It is a valuable work, and
 one which every person who is
 interested in the history of the world
 should possess.

SERMON XX.

2 TIMOTHY I. 12.

For the which cause I also suffer these things ; nevertheless I am not ashamed : for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

IT is appointed for all men once to die, and after death, the judgment. Death and judgment are awful in themselves, and of the last importance to every Gospel hearer. Death is the king of terrors. It will be dreadful beyond expression to all who shall feel its sting. Thrice happy they who can, on good grounds, triumph in views of it! Christ has conquered all our foes, and death among the rest. However powerful in itself, he has disarmed it to the believer. Nothing but an acquaintance with and interest in Christ can fortify the mind against the fear of death. If persons have their interest in him ascertained, instead of shrinking, they may desire death as the end of their miseries, an inlet to complete happiness, and chiefly as it introduces them into the presence of Christ, to go no more out. A desire to depart and be with Christ was the apostle's

habitual temper of mind. He was now ready to be offered up, and the time of his departure was at hand. Death in its most formidable aspect was before him; but instead of cowardice and fear, he displayed the greatest fortitude. In the text we have an account of what supported him; he knew whom he had believed, and was persuaded that he was able to keep what he had committed to him.

The happiness the Redeemer had already bestowed on him, and the crown of righteousness which he was certain was reserved for him in heaven, not only reconciled his mind to ignominy and death, but made him glory in tribulation. The same causes will produce the same effects. Christians, possessed of like precious faith, animated by the same hope, and certain about their calling and election, will, for the joy set before them, endure the cross, despising the shame. With Paul, they will triumph over death, and enter its dark isle with confidence and praise. If called to suffer in their Master's cause, they will not only be supported, but comforted, and enabled to rejoice under the severest tortures, and in the midst of the flames, *knowing whom they have believed.*

This is reckoned the last epistle Paul wrote. In it he warns Timothy, and every follower of Christ, of the dangers and hardships to which a public and avowed profession of the Gospel would expose them. It would render them the mark of public scorn and malice, expose them to reproach and contumely, make them the offscouring of all things, and perhaps subject them to stripes, imprisonment, and death. The apostle encourages to steadfastness from his own

example. He sets before them the tender care of the Redeemer about him in all his afflictions. He assures them that, even when all men forsook him, the Lord stood by him. He tells them that Christ would be equally tender of all his people to the end. He assures them that under all their sufferings Christ would support and comfort them by his gracious presence, and at last receive them to himself. Whatever their outward man might suffer, he would take care of what they had committed to him against that day.

This text would admit of a diffusive method, and a large discussion. We only propose to offer some observations to illustrate these precious words, and then subjoin some application. The following observations may be offered.

1. Faith in all its actings ultimately eyes a *Person*. It fixes upon the Redeemer. The apostle says, I know *whom* I have believed. Faith may differ in degrees of strength and activity in different persons; but never in its nature. The primary object of faith is the Divine testimony. It believes what God has spoken, and, taken in a large sense, includes an assent to the precepts and threatenings. But as these, strictly speaking, do not belong to the Gospel, the glad tidings of *pure* revelation, faith chiefly assents to the promises and the glorious doctrines which explain them. Possessed of faith, the soul considers the promises as addressed to sinners without exception, and to itself in particular. As they have the nature of an offer, faith assents to their

veracity, desires the good in them, and is inclined to receive the benefit.

As promises must be made by some person; faith eyes God as making the promises of salvation. As the Gospel knows nothing of God out of Christ; faith never goes beyond the Gospel for its information, and therefore always views him *only* as in Christ. As God deals with sinners only in Christ, faith never deals with God but in him. It embraces him as the one Mediator. It sees all the promises originally made to him, and ratified by his blood. It perceives him able and willing to accomplish them all, and accordingly receives and rests upon him.

2. No sooner does faith discover Christ, than it commits to him great and important concerns, assured that he, and no other, can be trusted. Faith never sees Christ and continues inactive. Paul got a saving sight of Jesus of Nazareth, and committed his soul to him. It is in the light of faith that men discover the importance of eternal concerns. It looks at the things that are unseen, opens up eternity, and the different abodes in the other world. Believing the Lord's word, the person sees that he is under the curse, deserves hell, and that, unless powerfully delivered, there he must land. He now discovers the vanity of every thing else if the soul be lost. He sees that it is on the brink of destruction, and that instead of losing time he has need to fly for refuge. By faith he is persuaded too that unless Christ interpose and save the soul he is in a desperate situation. God is angry, Satan rages, he can do nothing for

himself, and vain is the help of all the creatures. He can do nothing to remove God's wrath, or procure his favour. All refuge failing, faith solemnly commits the soul as the person's chief concern into the hands of the Lord Jesus. It never did or can do *less*. Without doing this it would not be faith. It may do it in a more vigorous manner after being long exercised: but still it does it. The first and the last words of faith are the same. In every period it uniformly says, Receive my spirit, or Into thine hand I commit my soul. It may change its *accent* or *tone*; but it never changes its *language*. The manner in which it commits the soul to Christ is worthy of notice. It looks around. Considering the person's condition and danger, it commits from *necessity*; and considering Christ's ability and willingness, from *propriety*. Viewing his death and atonement, his loving heart, and his arms of mercy stretched out, faith is persuaded that nothing can be more proper for a perishing soul than to put herself into the hands of a merciful Saviour. It is done. Impressed with this necessity and propriety, the sinner commits himself with vast *satisfaction* and *pleasure*. He has a ravishing joy corresponding to what the weary and heavy laden experience when they get rid of their burdens, or the man-slayer when he entered the city of refuge. Having entrusted the soul in the hands of the Redeemer, the believer views his own action with jealous eye, not grudging what he has done, but deeply concerned to know that he has done it in a right manner. Having once done it, and having set his foot on firm ground, he resolves in all time

coming to attempt the same exercise, and avoid the contrary as death and destruction.

3. In committing these important concerns into the hands of the Redeemer, faith has chiefly in its eye the day of death and of judgment. Paul committed his soul against *that day*. Eternity has the grand and leading influence on religion. The one prospers in proportion as we are impressed with the other. While thoughtless and unconcerned about eternity, we will always be indifferent about Christ. It is no wonder that the last day makes such impression upon the awakened soul as to engross the attention, and make it be spoken of with eminence and emphasis. It is the day when the plans of Providence, and the schemes of creatures, will all be finished: It will never be succeeded by another. In the transactions of that day every rational creature is deeply concerned. His condition will be solemnly and irreversibly decided for eternity. The day of death is of equal importance with that day. At death the state is decided. Then the soul appears before the Judge, and receives sentence. It will be recognized at the last day. It is this consideration which makes death so important. When it approaches, faith rouses itself, collects all its vigour, and loudly cries for mercy. With remarkable ardour it repeats its language, "Receive my soul." Why all these vehement exertions? The day which it always had in view is now at hand, and the prize will be gained, or lost for eternity!

That faith has this day in its eye is evident from its exercise respecting *others*. The best thing Paul

could do for another was to seek that he might find mercy in that day. Remarkable is that prayer in behalf of Onesiphorus, "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day." Mercy then is crowning, and all who receive it are everlastingly and infinitely happy. That faith has that day in its eye is also evident from the exercise of believers about *themselves*. At conversion, being fully persuaded that they must be judged by God, and sensible that they cannot stand on any thing of their own; they put their souls into Christ's hands as a *depositum* and *trust* to be kept by him against that day, presented by him in that decisive period, and be kept under his immediate care during the final judgment. Christ receives the trust, and gives the highest evidence at last that he was worthy of it. Well may he address the believer who put his soul into his hand, and say, There is thine own with interest; I have let no ill befall it, I have neither lost it, nor suffered any to pluck it out of my hand: when ready to go astray I brought it back, and never allowed it to wander within the flood-mark of Divine wrath: when cited before the Judge I kept it in my hand, and answered myself: now, enter into the joys of thy Lord: heaven and all my fulness are thine! No doubt faith commits the soul for *time*, and the journey through the wilderness. The believer puts himself into Christ's hand for duty and trial, difficulty and danger; but still with an eye to the day of death and of judgment. His constant language is, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. My flesh and my heart

faileth ; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. This God is my God for ever and ever : he will be my guide even unto death." The apostle says, " If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." We might add, if we committed our souls for this life only, however important in itself ; still, without an eye to that day, it would be of little moment.

4. When faith commits these important concerns to Christ against that day, it always discovers him as unspeakably worthy of being trusted, and is persuaded that he cannot be trusted in vain. The apostle says, I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is *able* to keep that which I have committed unto him. It is this discovery that makes the believer deposit his soul in the hands of the Redeemer with confidence and ease. Every thing about this transaction is too weighty and important to be committed to any, unless he is an object worthy of the highest trust. The believer trusts him with the *soul*, his better part. He employs him about the *most important work*—salvation from sin and wrath ; and for a *period* of no shorter duration than eternity. These things are of infinite consequence, and plainly show that the object entrusted must be seen *able* to manage such momentous concerns.

Faith considers and credits the account given of Christ in the Scriptures, where he is pointed out as worthy of the highest confidence. There he is expressly called the Most High God, and the most indubitable proofs of his divinity are adduced. He is exhibited as God in our nature. He became man

that he might suffer in our room, and have an experimental acquaintance with our miseries. In his official character the Scriptures exhibit him as appointed and sealed by his Father, to purchase immortal souls, and heaven as their eternal inheritance. Every where, they declare that he has done it in his death. Thus we read of the redemption of the purchased possession, and that the saints are redeemed, not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. Redemption is always spoken of as the fruit of his death, and his blood is expressly declared to be the price. The Scriptures represent him as full of grace and truth, and exhibit him in the most amiable and endearing relations, to induce sinners to entrust him with their souls. They proclaim that he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto him. This declaration must include his willingness. Without this, a revelation of his ability could never yield comfort to a soul oppressed with guilt, and would be directly opposite to the glad tidings of salvation. In the word he is expressly set before sinners as the great ordinance of God for salvation; and it is the amount of Divine revelation to beseech them to come, behold his worthiness, and commit their souls to him for salvation. In the *very act* of entrusting Christ with the soul, faith has actual experience of his being worthy. *Coming*, believers find rest. In the act of stretching forth the withered hand, it is healed. Committing itself to Christ, the soul leans and rests on him, and the believer finds himself safe as on a

rock or in a garrison; and every renewed act of faith increases this comfortable experience.

5. When faith has got a discovery of Christ as worthy of trust, and has actually committed the soul into his hand; though many attempts should be made to shake it, it is not easily moved. After Paul had employed Christ for salvation, many endeavours were used to shake his confidence; but all in vain. When he wrote this, he was under cruel persecution, and had the immediate prospect of a painful and ignominious death. But none of these things moved him. So it is with believers. Faith proceeded on good and infallible grounds when it first surrendered the soul to Christ. It ventured on the promise and oath of Jehovah. Acting in this manner was the result of deliberation, and produced solid satisfaction. The poor believer had tried many other objects, and found them inadequate, and refuges of lies. Wearied out, he left them all, as Lot the cursed city, devoted to destruction. Now, when harassed with temptations about the unworthiness of Christ, faith cannot but be persuaded that HE is infinitely worthy of being trusted as a *keeper*, who, being God, undertook to be the surety of sinners, and gave himself to be a propitiation.

Almost innumerable are the attempts to shake the soul that has entrusted Christ against that day. Unbelief makes a constant business of it. It insists upon the improbability of God dying for his creatures, and for such a guilty wretch as the person's self. It urges that we have never seen him, that we have no

ground of confidence but a slender promise, and that, considering our guilt, a bare word is no sufficient ground. Satan joins league with unbelief, and urges a thousand things to shake the soul. Particularly, he improves adverse dispensations of Providence for that purpose, and suggests that, if Jesus would care for the soul against that day, he would certainly keep it in a more comfortable situation, and not allow it to be assailed by so many troubles. He constantly insinuates that, if Christ had taken charge of the believer, his corruptions would not be so powerful and troublesome. Besides, he oppresses the soul with a flood of horrible suggestions against God, all tending to point him out as cruel and severe. The world too joins these enemies, and uses all its industry and art to shake the confidence of the saint. It tries to allure him from Christ. Presenting itself a rival, it claims the heart. Borrowing Satan's language, it says, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt worship me, and not one whom thou hast never seen. It urges the most flattering promises. It constantly talks of its pleasures and profits. It represents an anxious care about eternity as unnecessary, ridiculous, and vexation of spirit. If it does not prevail by these seducing arts, it endeavours to terrify the saint. Such as believe on Christ, if they continue steadfast, are reckoned unworthy of life, and often the most formidable instruments of death are employed, with all the severity that hell can dictate, or malice invent, to extirpate them. Thus unbelief endeavours to *argue* us from Christ. Satan exerts himself to *seduce* or *terrify* us from the exercise of

faith: and the world takes every possible method either to *prevent* religion by ridicule and cruel mockings, or *raze* it to the foundation by exterminating such as profess it. But all in vain. Christ has apprehended the soul, and by faith it has apprehended him. The saint is joined to the Lord, and is one spirit. The Holy Ghost is the bond of union. He is the immediate agent who produces faith; and he preserves it. He supports it under trials, and increases it in proportion to their severity and number. Believers are kept by the mighty power of God. While the Lord supports and strengthens their faith, they use every mean to increase it themselves. They have many arguments and considerations calculated to keep it firm and from staggering, and especially according to our text, *that day*, that great and important day, which they had in their eye when they first believed, *is still before them*.

6. Under all attempts to shape it, faith in Christ strengthens itself by considering its *object* and *exercise*. Amidst Paul's great sufferings and severe hardships, he strengthened himself by reviewing *what* he had done, and considering anew the glorious *Person* whom he had trusted. These words, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him," evidently imply that, while he had acted faith before, he was just now considering that great Person whom he had trusted, and pondering on his amazing worth. Impressed with his dignity, and stupendous love, he was persuaded that all he could suffer for him, scarcely deserved the name, and that instead of cast-

ing away his confidence for the severest persecutions, he could endure a thousand times more, were it possible, to testify his love to the Redeemer, and promote his cause. The more faith views and considers Christ, the more hardships it will endure, and with the greater alacrity. All the martyrs have adopted Paul's way of strengthening their faith. When religion and cruel death have been placed on the one side, and life at the expense of recanting on the other; faith takes another view of Christ, and is encouraged. It sees that these afflictions are light, and but for a moment, that Christ is able to support under them, and that they work out an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. It considers the severity of Christ's sufferings, and that he suffered the just for the unjust. Should the soul be ready to shrink at the sight of tortures, faith is animated by the prospect of present support, and the ponderous crown of glory. Poor distressed persons, at the point of expiring on beds of languishing, have tried to strengthen themselves in the same manner. When God's waves and billows passed over them, and heart and flesh were about to fail, through sharp distress and exquisite agony, their faith was like to stagger. In this trying moment, they looked to Christ and were lightened. A believing view of Christ as once dead, now alive, and entered within the veil as their forerunner, made them possess their souls in patience. Keeping their eye upon him, they suffered with submission, bare with cheerfulness, and died with comfort and triumph. A consideration of Christ, as calculated to strengthen and support the soul, is not confined to

these great trials and last scenes; but is the believers' usual way and only resource in all their prior afflictions. Already acquainted with Jesus as in straits a present aid, they say, We will not fear, and argue, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." The eye of faith, the oftener and longer it looks to Christ, discovers the more of his fulness, and with greater certainty and clearness. Instead of being hurt by taking a long and steady view of its object, it is invigorated, and strengthens the soul.

That it may not fail, faith considers *itself*, as well as Christ. Paul, in the prospect of death, took a serious consideration of what he had done when he committed his soul into the hands of the Redeemer against that day. The world laughs at faith. Paul knew it to be a very solemn and important exercise. He found it necessary to commit his soul to Christ when going to Damascus; and he finds it equally necessary now when he is to suffer at Rome. Stript of all his self-sufficiency, he was convinced he could not *live* without Christ. After it pleased the Lord to reveal his Son in his heart, the life which he lived was a life of faith on the Son of God. Christ lived in him, and without Christ he could not live. Love to the Redeemer constrained him to every duty, and sweetened all his trials. Ravished with partial communion, and animated by the hope of full enjoyment, nothing could separate him from the love of Christ. He could not *die without* him. If called to it, he was

willing to die *for* him. Having committed his soul to Christ was his gloriation and boast. He was determined never to retract. The more frequently or seriously he reviewed the great transaction of surrendering his soul to the Saviour, he was the better satisfied in what he had done. Viewed in this light the text is as if he had said, "O Timothy, I have suffered much for Christ and his Gospel; for my faith and a steady profession of it: I must suffer much more, unless I recant: I thought the Lord Jesus infinitely worthy of being trusted when I first committed my soul to him; I was persuaded that entrusting him with my best concerns was most reasonable in itself, and advantageous to me:—the near approach of death and martyrdom loudly calls me to review what I have done, and take a narrow inspection of my exercise: I am now doing it: I would not wish to deceive myself, or others: I can have no sinister ends: death with all its outward terrors is before me: I stand on the brink of eternity: I am giving you my last letter, and dying counsel: before, and in the very time of writing it, I have again considered the object of my faith, the exercise of it, and my sincerity:—I say on the best grounds, Christ is most worthy; faith is most reasonable; and with an honest heart I have committed my soul into his hands: I heartily approve of all I have done: I shall abide by it, and die:—Timothy, be thou also faithful to the death, and the Lord Jesus will give thee the crown of life: exert thyself in the Redeemer's cause: be wise to win souls to Christ: though all men should forsake thee, the Lord will not." This reconsideration was Paul's

habitual exercise. Every believer will follow the same course, especially in trials. It is essential to faith, and an eminent mean of promoting steadfastness, and growth in grace.

7. We also observe, that faith derives such strength from Christ under *present* sufferings as encourages the believer in views of the greatest *future* trials. As one wave succeeds another, so did the apostle's afflictions. When one billow passed, he scarcely had time to breathe before he was overwhelmed with another. In them all he was supported. The everlasting arms were underneath him. From support in one, he argued that he would be strengthened under the next. His reasoning was conclusive. It was founded on the faithful promise, and infinite care of the Redeemer. Death was before him. He was firmly persuaded that he who had brought him through Red Seas of troubles, would carry him safely over Jordan. Faith cannot act otherwise. It comes empty to Christ. It seeks and receives supply from his fulness. It gives nothing, and takes all. While it always comes empty to the Redeemer, it does so especially in trials; and it never comes in vain. The soul is strengthened. While experience of support and supply in every trial is a proof of his love and care, his power and faithfulness; it encourages the believing soul in the prospect of every future affliction. The saints argue, he who has delivered will deliver. They are trained to face one enemy and danger after another, till at last they defy death itself. The amount of their experience and encouragement is, "I have often been brought very low; in all my

straits I went to Christ: I never went in vain: I have found him rich in mercy: I will make application to no other quarter: all my expectation is from him; and I will always apply to him: he cannot be worse; and I must be successful: and it is as easy for an omnipotent arm and almighty grace to support the soul in death, as in the least trial."

8. Already encouraged by rest and repose in the Redeemer, faith *always* might rise to the greatest assurance about acceptance and salvation, and *often* actually does it. The apostle spake in the language of assurance. His tone is firm, and without hesitation. He says, I *know* whom I have believed, and am *persuaded*. Thousands have adopted the same language without self-deception, or vain gloriation. There is always the highest reason for assurance in the grounds of faith laid down in Scripture. There is a grant of Christ to all, to every individual, and to the worst. The promise makes over Christ and all his fulness to them that are afar off and to them that are nigh. It is God's commandment that men believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. He commands men every where to repent, and true repentance can only flow from faith. These are the grounds of faith. Standing on these, faith may speak with assurance and confidence. But the man who has already committed his soul to Christ, enjoys rest and peace from being so comfortably and safely lodged. This repose is both refreshing and encouraging. At anchor within the vail, faith weathers every storm. Inured to so many, and having seen the waves, times innumerable, dash and beat to no purpose, he is firmly

persuaded that the greatest hurricane cannot hurt him, and that when floods of great waters swell up to the brim, they shall not overwhelm his soul, nor come near to him. United to Christ, he makes his boast in God. Though thousands should rise up against him, he will not be afraid. Assurance that Christ is mine in particular, his righteousness mine for all the purposes of salvation, and that through the grace of the Lord Jesus I shall be saved, is essential to faith. Nothing short of this particular appropriation would answer to the home charge of the law, the particular accusations of conscience, or the pressing calls of the Gospel. But a person may have an appropriating faith who can scarcely adopt Paul's triumphant language in the text. But faith and experience shall increase. They shall know who follow on to know. When, like the apostle, believers have been supported under many troubles, and had ample experience that Christ answers to his precious characters in the word, their confidence and assurance will increase. Like a tree whose roots fasten and spread the more the wind and storms appear to pluck it up, their faith will gradually rise into solid assurances and confidence, till at last it says, with firmness, "My beloved is mine and I am his,—the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me,—I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better,—to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,—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 me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord ;” or, as in the text, “ I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

Such as are suitably impressed with death and eternity, on hearing these things, cannot be altogether unconcerned. They must instantly pronounce them happy who can adopt the apostle’s language, and ardently desire they could do it themselves. They are persuaded that no trial can be too heavy for such as know whom they have believed, and that they may meet death itself as a weak and impotent foe, and triumph over it as disarmed and unstinged. They justly conclude that such as are certain of their interest in Christ may rejoice evermore. As for themselves, they are often disconsolate and dejected. They know nothing of that unspeakable and glorious joy which flows from believing. They desire to be interested in Christ, but cannot declare that they are so. They are well acquainted with doubts and fears, but scarcely feel the principle of faith. Death and judgment impress their minds, and they can hardly think of them without terror. Gladly would they commit their souls into Christ’s hands. They have often tried it ; but are afraid they have not done it in a right manner, because they are still dejected and without comfort. They have often examined their own hearts. They find abundance of sin, but little else. If they had it, they would this moment give a world to be certain of their interest in Christ.

and able on good grounds to say with the apostle, I know whom I have believed, &c. Gladly would we dispel the darkness, and dissipate the clouds so distressing to the disconsolate mind. With joy would we irradiate their hearts, and persuade them that they have believed. The Holy Ghost alone can enlighten the mind, and comfort the heart. His word is power. He is the comforter. He bears witness with our spirits that we have believed. He works by means. Perhaps he may bless what follows to some, and persuade them that on good grounds they may adopt the language in the text.

The man who would comfortably adopt the language in the text must be

Much versant in the Scriptures. They testify of Christ and eternal life. They unfold the method of grace and salvation. They discover and exhibit the object of faith. They reveal the warrant which sinners have to believe. They are the great means of beginning and increasing faith. "They are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name. By the word sinners are begotten again unto a lively hope." Without an acquaintance with the word, we can never know if our faith be genuine. None who neglect or despise the Scripture, can with the least propriety say, they know whom they have believed.

He must be a careful observer of his own heart, and in some good measure acquainted with it. Paul searched carefully and narrowly into his. Without this it is impossible to know what passes in it. When

implanted in the soul, grace can neither be observed nor maintained without much care and pains. There is such a mass of corruption, such a powerful principle of unbelief and legality, as tend to keep faith out of view. Satan's temptations, like thick clouds, so darken the mind as to render it unfit for observing the workings of faith. The great duty of self-examination is necessary. Without this we can scarcely expect to know ourselves aright. Paul frequently enjoined it, and diligently practised it. Most memorable is his exhortation to the Corinthians, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Peter urged the same duty, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure:" and points out the happy effects of it, "for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." We cannot expect the end without using the means. If we would have the apostle's attainments, we should walk in his steps. Our duty and interest, our peace and consolation, loudly call us to strict examination of our own hearts. Habitually neglecting this duty, no one has *present* evidence that he has committed his soul to Christ, and cannot appropriate the words of the text.

He must be acquainted with Christ. His knowledge of the Redeemer must be in the light of the *Scriptures*. He must have an inward revelation of him, as well as an outward. He must be acquainted with him in the light of the *Holy Ghost*. No man can

call Jesus Lord but by the Spirit, or see him worthy of being entrusted with the soul. However much Gospel hearers have heard of Christ, when the Spirit makes a discovery of him, it will be new and astonishing, inviting and refreshing. Then they may say with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee." They will be sensible that flesh and blood could not reveal the Redeemer. Their acquaintance must be *experimental*. All who have resigned their souls unto Christ, have deep experience that they need him, and that he is suited to their condition; that they are weaned from every other refuge, and ardently desire him. If they are believers of any standing, they will have some experience that he answers to the gracious characters of the Priest and Prophet of his church, and the King and Keeper of his people.

He must presently believe. No man can know in whom he has believed, and be persuaded that Christ was worthy of former trust, without seeing him deserving present trust. He who has formerly resigned his soul to Christ will see present faith to be his highest interest, as well as duty. Former faith lodged the soul in the Saviour's hands, and present believing recognizes the former deed, and, if we might use the phrase, keeps it there.

He must have great gratitude. The man who gives his perishing soul to be kept and saved by the Redeemer, must be thankful that he receives it. Faith never speaks of Christ but in the language of gratitude. It receives him as God's unspeakable gift, and stirs up all that is within the soul to bless the great Giver. Praise is the chief exercise of heaven,

and will be attempted here by all who know whom they have believed. The song above is, "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:" and it should be begun below. *There*, they are in full possession. *Here*, saints of the apostle's attainments have absolute certainty of complete salvation.

Believers, you have resigned your souls to Christ. He has received them. He will be faithful to his trust. The Lord is honoured. You are happy. Your enemies are foiled, and salvation is sure. Rejoice in the Lord. Again I say rejoice. You will never find the Redeemer's kindness decrease. The creatures are fickle. You can never be certain of finding *them* as you left them. You will *always* find *him* full of grace and truth. He is immutable, and rests in his love. He says (and you should believe it) "with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you: the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from you." His gifts and callings are without repentance. If he frowns, it is because he loves you. All things shall work together for your good. Never distrust him. Rely on his word. Faithful is he that has promised. He has given grace, and he will give glory. You should do something for him, who has done so much for you. Walk worthy of him. Submit to his will. Put no harsh constructions on his conduct. Prize his ordinances. Press after communion with him. Commend him to others. Pray without ceasing for

the prosperity of his interest. Give him no rest till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Be strong in faith. Trust him in views of every trial, and death itself. Comfort yourselves with those words, we shall be ever with the Lord; for he is able to keep that which we have committed to him.

And what are you to do with your souls, O sinners! The Redeemer has sought them, and you have refused. He beseeches you now to be reconciled. He stands and knocks, seeking access to your hearts. Will you always oppose his gracious design? Will you always destroy yourselves? What will you do in the hour of death? How can you dwell with everlasting burnings! Satan now lulls you asleep. Continuing in your sins, he will eternally upbraid and torment you. For the Lord's sake believe. Commend your souls to Christ without delay. Take the relief the Gospel offers. Cast yourselves at the Saviour's feet, and cry for mercy. Do not delay till you are better prepared. Come as you are. However great your sins may be, he will blot them out as a thick cloud. If you still refuse, there will be a melancholy and irremediable difference between you, and such as have resigned their souls to Christ in the important and critical hour of death. *You* will have nothing but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation. *They* will gently fall asleep in Jesus, and enter into endless rest. Therefore mark, and timeously imitate the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace; but the transgressors shall be destroyed together. Sinners, think on THAT DAY!

SERMON XXI.

ZECHARIAH IV. 6.

This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.

THE Jews were at this time building the second temple. The work met with great opposition; but the builders were indefatigable. Constrained by love, they submitted to the greatest hardships with alacrity, and their diligence was invincible. The Lord encouraged them. He commissioned this and another prophet to speak a word in season. They assured the builders, in the name of the Lord, that the work should be finished, and that the Messiah would dignify the temple with his own personal presence. Living nearer the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, they prophesied about him with increasing perspicuity. Haggai designed him the *Glory of the latter house*. Zechariah pointed him out as the *Branch* ever green, and flourishing—able to build his temple, and defend all who would come under his shadow. This prophet had different visions. Some were directed to Joshua, and this to Zerubbabel. The great design of it is, to assure the prophet, and

by him the people, that the good work should prosper, and by the special care of Providence, and the immediate influence of Divine grace, be brought to an happy issue.

The building of the second temple is an emblem of the great work which will be carried on in the church to the end of time. Christ's spiritual temple will meet with great opposition. All the deceit and violence which Satan and his agents can exert, will be employed against it. Whoever may be for Christ, the many and the mighty will be against him. But the work shall prosper. Though those employed in it may be small and despised, the Lord stands by them. They are workers together with God, and must be successful. He can nip the designs of enemies in the bud, or blast them when fully blown. His hand is invisible, but almighty and energetic.

The design of the text is to inspire Zerubbabel with courage. If he was destitute of external might and power, the prophet assures him of unseen aid, and solaces his heart by the promise of the Spirit. This encouragement is equally applicable to all who would, at another period, engage in the Lord's work, and endeavour to promote it. It is peculiarly applicable and animating to the saints in times of backsliding and declension. Though few should engage in the Lord's work, and though they should be destitute of external aid, Jehovah is on their side, and the Holy Spirit will build the spiritual temple. Thus aided and animated, they will surmount every obstacle, and overcome every difficulty. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper among them. David's horn

shall bud forth. This and that man shall be born in Zion; and Christ shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.

What we further design in this discourse, is to illustrate the method in which the Lord carries on his work as expressed in the text, specify some of the excellent purposes answered by it, and then apply the whole.

I. It was proposed to illustrate the method in which the Lord carries on his work. The text naturally divides it into two branches: it is *not* carried on *by might and power*; but *by the Lord's Spirit*.

The first branch is, that the Lord's work is not promoted by might and power. About this we make the following observations.

1. The Redeemer's work does not depend on *legal authority*. Some are of opinion that this is meant by the term *power*. The highest authority, without the assistance and blessing of the Lord of hosts, can never make religion prosper. Let it be enjoined by laws ever so numerous and excellent, it will not flourish without the Lord's blessing. However highly the doctrines of Christianity may be encouraged by legal establishments, they will dwindle into nothing, vanish away, or be exchanged for others different in their nature and effects, without Divine countenance. Like the Lord's peculiar people of old, the doctrines of grace have often prospered in proportion to their oppression. The powers and princes of this world have been more frequently hurtful than helpful. Igno-

rant of the Lord of glory, they have oftener crucified him than paid him homage. Many times have they rejected his doctrines, but seldom received them. The history of the church abundantly proves that they have been her enemies. Their hostile attempts have been equally hurtful in opposite extremes. Their *smiles* have produced multitudes of apostates, and their *frowns* have kindled the furnace and flames of persecution. The Redeemer's work by no means depends on them. It flourished when they were all in arms against it, and will prosper in spite of all their opposition. The Lord Jesus is the author of the Doctrines of Faith, and will preserve them. He has promised to be with his servants to the end, and to bestow his blessing wherever his name is recorded. Should the princes of this world appear friendly to religion, their favour might multiply professors; but nothing short of Divine grace can make a single soul receive the truth in the love of it. The countenance of earthly princes is fickle and mutable. Divine countenance is secured by the faithful promise and oath of him who cannot lie.

2. The Redeemer's kingdom and interest are not supported by *external force*, and the courage and prowess of armies. Human lusts produce wars, and induce men to bite and devour one another. So situated, military forces may be necessary for their support. These the church can seldom command, and the want of them is compensated in her Captain and King. He is both the breaker-up of her way, and her rearward. He is mightier than all who can be against her. He supplies the force of armies, and

military courage and skill. His faithfulness is her shield and buckler. Like the pillar of old, his presence enlightens her, and is a defence against all her foes. As *members of civil society*, Christians are entitled to the same rights with others. Their religious profession should neither interfere with, nor invalidate their natural rights. They may plead them; and should never be deprived of them. Like the apostle, they may claim and improve the advantages of being free born; and in opposition to the malicious and unjust decisions of chief priests and elders, they may appeal unto Cesar. True religion may make men better citizens, but cannot make them worse. As *church members*, the King of saints will protect them. The Lord will fight for Zion and the hill thereof. Christ's kingdom is not of this world, and he does not support it by secular power and influence. Had it been of this world, he would have fought when in it. He girds not the carnal but spiritual sword on his thigh, and rides on the white horse of the Gospel to conquer. The weapons of his followers are not carnal, but mighty through God to baffle opposition. We have a beautiful emblem of the method in which the church is supported, in the return of the Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem. They applied not to the Babylonian monarch for support, but to God. They fasted at the river Ahava. God heard their supplications, and answered their cries. He protected their persons, prospered their journey, and defended their cause.

3. Christ's work is not carried on by *numbers*. Though they had neither legal authority nor military

force, great numbers might overcome all opposition, and prevail. Christ's spiritual temple never was, and never will be built by mere superiority of number. A country may be Christianized. Professors may increase to vast multitudes. But, in order to promote the Lord's spiritual temple, like Gideon's army, they must be tried, thinned, and reduced. About numbers the common rule is, Many are called, but few chosen; broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and *many* there be which go in thereat; but narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and *few* there be that find it. About to settle the Gospel in any particular place, men have often such a desire for numbers as evidences much want of spirituality and faith. The usual way of supporting a proper testimony for Christ is by a *few names*. With a simple dependance on the Redeemer, a few will afford that outward support which is necessary for his cause. Instead of discouraging from prayer, this consideration should urge us to wrestle that this and that man may be born in Zion. Our minds should be deeply impressed with this truth, that numbers of themselves can never build the temple of the Lord; and that a few, commissioned and countenanced by the King of Zion, can do much with him, while multitudes can do nothing without him. Though few in number, and opposed by legal authority, the apostles planted Christianity in many places. Often a very few have supported the Lord's truths in the place where Providence fixed their lot, without external aid, and in opposition to all attempts to crush them. Christ's gracious presence is of incalculable

worth; and he may well say to his few followers, "How many take ye ME to be?"

4. The Lord's work is not carried on by *worldly influence and grandeur*. Many professing the true religion have been apt to think that, should such a person join them, and add his weight and influence to the good cause, it would certainly prosper. Commissioned to anoint one of Jesse's sons, even the prophet himself was caught in this snare. He made up his mind about the Lord's anointed, by external appearance. Many still argue, "were such an one among us, he would bring his friends and favourites." The Lord sees not as man sees. He commonly chooses the foolish things of this world, and things that are not, to support his interest. Now and then, a person of eminence may become a builder in Christ's spiritual temple. If he engages from single views, he comes as a little child, and not to be admired and applauded; and if he wants to attract attention, it is by his Christian walk and conversation, his fervent supplication and spiritual advice; and not by his exterior influence. Doubtless he will exert himself in the Redeemer's cause; but he will do it in the way which his great Master has appointed. "It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes. Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." The Lord works all the work, and is entitled to all the glory. We should have a simple dependance on him.

5. Far less is the building of Christ's spiritual temple to be carried on by *carnal policy and worldly wisdom*. Antichrist has uniformly adopted this method; but it

is infinitely removed from the Redeemer. The church has been pestered with plans of this kind. Carnal policy has frequently been employed to bring in them who were without, and retain in the bosom of the church such as ought to have been rejected. Temporizing compliances have been adopted about the doctrines of religion, both as to the matter and manner of declaring them. The matter has been changed, and corrupted. Important articles have been renounced, and corrupt traditions added. The whole method of grace has been vitiated and adulterated. Schemes equally prejudicial have been employed to render them palatable by the manner. The simplicity of the Gospel has been exchanged for the enticing words of men's wisdom. The cross of Christ has been laid aside, that Christianity might be suited to the carnal inclinations and affections of men. The grand characteristic of evangelical doctrine, that it exalts the Saviour, and humbles the sinner, has been rejected; and something substituted in its place, which gratifies self and human pride, and keeps the sinner away from the Saviour. The same method has extended to practices. Professed Christians have not only mingled with the heathen, and learned their way, but have gone half way to meet them. This and the other practice has been considered first as tolerable, then as admissible, and at length as proper, and calculated to remove the prejudices of the world against religion, and such as profess it, and induce others to associate with them, and join in the same profession. It can be no wonder though the Lord blast such methods; but it would

be a wonder if he blessed them. It is a matter of the last importance to be faithful.

6. In carrying on his work, the Lord *often* rejects the means which are most *likely and probable in themselves*. In this sense, might and power are not always in opposition to God's method; but in subordination to it. Viewed in the best light, the most plausible means are never to be doated on. Divine power alone must stir up, and bless the most likely means before they can be useful. When probable means are depended on, and get a place which they do not deserve, and God is forgotten; they are often removed. Even then the saints have no reason to be anxious or unbelieving, while God is under obligation by his promise to prosper and promote his own work. When continued, the Divine blessing alone can make these means effectual; and when taken away, the Lord can make his work prosper without them. When all visible power and might fail, he is the Lord of hosts. In carrying on his work, Christ often lays aside the means and instruments on which the Church is most inclined to depend, that he may exalt his own power. He has often adopted this method about remarkable deliverances and interpositions. The means, on which his people depended in the extremity of distress, failed; but his wisdom and love were the more illustriously displayed. We are far from meaning to insinuate that God will carry on his work without the appointed means of grace. We only mean that the Lord's work does not depend on this and the other instrument, on talents of a certain description, or on some peculiar address. When

the means of grace are dispensed, there is often too much of the creature in some discourses for the Creator to adopt them; and if we lay undue weight on any instrument, God may justly blast him, for he will not give his glory to another. Alas! we have not far to seek for an example in point! But He does all well!

We now proceed to the second branch, which is, that the Lord's work is carried on by *his Spirit*.

1. The Holy Ghost is qualified for promoting Christ's work as he is a Divine Person. Divine wisdom and power are absolutely necessary for building the spiritual temple. The Holy Ghost is the true God, and possessed of both. Every thing about the salvation of sinners is a great mystery. The doctrines of religion are such a depth that the angels desire to look into them. They learn from the church the manifold wisdom of God. None but a Divine Person could know those that belong to the election of grace, and though they did, they would be ignorant how to gain their hearts. Without infinite wisdom, the various necessities and conditions of such as are lively stones in Christ's temple could never be understood, instead of being supplied. The same may be said about the wiles of their enemies, and their own evil inclinations. Divine power is as necessary as infinite wisdom, both to defeat the opposition, and execute the work. The *opposition* is great and unremitting. The fallen angels have drawn the whole human race into a conspiracy against God, and none but God can make sinners own their allegiance to their rightful Lord. To form proper con-

ceptions of the opposition made to Christ's work, we ought to consider the innumerable attempts, and the incalculable obstructions made to the conversion and sanctification of one sinner. We should also keep in mind that as far as Satan and the world are permitted, the opposition to them all is equally great. Some saints may be more harassed than others, and some sinners are better qualified for promoting Satan's interest; but his enmity to God, and the salvation of sinners, is malicious and unabating. Put the case, that he might lose less by the salvation of some individual than others; such is his malignity that it makes him exert himself to the utmost to oppose every conversion. The heart itself is enmity against God, and peculiarly inimical to his grace. After being long dead and in the graves, men will as soon reassume their natural life as begin the spiritual, and believe on the Son of God. Omnipotence is absolutely necessary to dispossess the strong man, and implant grace. The exceeding greatness of that power which raised Christ from the dead is indispensably requisite. The Gospel report will never be credited till the arm of Jehovah be revealed. When the opposition is defeated *the work is but half done*. Not only must the rubbish be removed, but the foundation must be properly laid, and the spiritual edifice reared up. Dead sinners must be quickened, and born again. Sanctification must be gradually promoted, and none but a Divine Person can work in the heart of sinners both to will and to do. Possessed of the same perfections, and equally engaged in the work of salvation, the Holy Spirit.

like Christ, is able to save to the uttermost, and infinitely willing. Opposition must vanish before him. In the day of his power, the most obdurate shall be made willing. Often he is resisted when he strives; but where he has a design of grace, hell and earth can neither prevent nor retard it. He is in the church prosecuting the Redeemer's cause, and it must prosper. All opposing endeavours will at last serve only to display, in a more illustrious manner, his wisdom and power, vigilance and care; and of all who are given to Christ, he will lose none. While these comforting conclusions flow from his divinity, they are confirmed by facts. Few could be better qualified to promote Satan's interest, or more cordial and active in his cause, than Saul of Tarsus: but in a moment, the prey was taken from the mighty. Equal power is always necessary, and shall certainly be exerted.

2. The Holy Ghost promotes this work in an official character as the Spirit of Christ and in a spiritual manner. *He is the Spirit of Christ.* Thus Christ himself says, Prov. i. 23, "Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out *my* Spirit unto you." Christ opened the channel for the Holy Ghost, and procured his influences. He is employed in the same cause with the Redeemer, and supplies his place. Christ took particular notice of this, Haggai ii. 5, "According to the word which I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so *my* Spirit remaineth among you." Before his death, frequently and with infinite grace, he promised to send the Comforter. This gracious title is most comprehen-

sive, and includes the whole application of salvation. To accomplish this great work, he dwells more immediately in Zion than either the Father or the Son. In his official character he is equally qualified with the Mediator, and will be no less faithful. Till his wisdom be outwitted, and his power exceeded, his good will eradicated, and his promises invalidated, the work must prosper. He carries it on *in a spiritual manner*. When sinners are converted or saints sanctified, the great Agent is invisible, and his operations secret and mysterious; but the effect is certain and irresistible. He breathes his Divine influence into the heart like the blowing of the wind. He falls like the rain, and distils as the gentle dew. Promoting it in a spiritual manner, the kingdom of God cometh not with observation. At Pentecost, and during the lives of the apostles, his effects were extraordinary and visible. In a settled state of the church, he accompanies the still small voice of the Gospel with powerful, but imperceptible virtue. As to conversions, this and that man is turned to the Lord. He distributes his influences here a little and there a little. The joy of the saints is what strangers do not intermeddle with. He must promote it in a spiritual manner, as he uses *spiritual instruments*. The chief of these are his word and ordinances. He makes the voice of Providence subservient to both. The great end of the work is spiritual. His chief design is to take away the old, and give a new heart, and make the outward actions run in a new channel, as influenced by the great principle of love, and directed to the glory of God as their great end.

3. The Holy Ghost carries on the Redeemer's work by promoting and spreading the Gospel, and blessing the doctrines of the cross. The Gospel is the grand instrument for promoting Christ's interest. This enlightens all the borders of Israel. Where there is no vision the people perish. Wherever he has much people, he sends it. He sends it to gather even a few. Wherever it is faithfully preached it meets with great opposition. It was an adage of Luther's "to preach the Gospel is to draw down the vengeance of the world." But the Holy Ghost maintains and supports it. By him it is given to some to believe the Gospel, and to others to suffer for it. He bestows such grace on many, as makes them declare, and prove, in fact, that they are set for the defence of the Gospel. Tasting the sweetness and nourishing effects of the bread of life broken in ordinances, they make strong and vigorous exertions to procure and retain it. The history of the church is filled with accounts of what the Lord's people have done for the Gospel. *He blesses the doctrines of the cross.* After Christ has shed his blood to open a channel for the Holy Spirit, and procure his influences, it cannot once be supposed that the Spirit should accompany and bless doctrines diametrically opposite to the cross. Remarkable is the apostle's question, Gal. iii. 2, "This only would I learn of you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" The Spirit never did, and never can bless those tenets which secretly undermine and sap the doctrines of free grace through the Redeemer's righteousness, or openly and avowedly

oppose them. Moral harangues will never change the heart, or reform the life. If we would make the world better, and put an effectual stop to the progress of vice and immorality, we should preach Christ. The Holy Spirit not only blesses the glad tidings of salvation, but *disposes* of them according to his sovereign pleasure. He sends the Gospel to one place, and not to another. He did not suffer it to go to Bithynia, but sent it to Macedonia. He will direct its course to the end of the world. Wherever he sends it, he makes it the savour of life to some. No wise man sows all his seed by the way-side.

4. The Holy Spirit promotes the Redeemer's interest by his *gifts*. He appoints and separates some to take the oversight of his flock, and qualifies them for their work. The various offices in Zion are Christ's ascension gifts for the good of his body, as the apostle declares, Ephes. iv. 10—13, "He ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things: and he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." All whom the Lord employs in his service are qualified by the Spirit. There are diversity of gifts, but they are all from him. We have an account of these 1 Cor. xii. 7—11, where after enumerating the various gifts in the church, the apostle expressly ascribed them all to the Spirit: "but all

these worketh that one and the self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." The great diversity of gifts is for the edification of the church. While office-bearers are endowed and qualified for their work, every member has a share from the same Spirit, suited to his place and station, for the benefit of the body. The gifts of the Holy Ghost should be employed, as well as his graces. Among those employed in public work, some are sons of thunder, and others of consolation. The Spirit appoints them their station, and fits them for their work.

5. He advances Christ's work as a *Spirit of grace*. In this character he chiefly promotes the interest of the Redeemer. When building the second temple, the Jews were encouraged by a precious and comforting promise from Christ of the Holy Spirit as a "Spirit of grace," Zech. xii. 10. It was grace alone which moved him to undertake the application of redemption. Free sovereign grace moved the adorable Three to dwell with men upon earth. Grace chose every sinner who shall be saved, and the Saviour to accomplish his redemption. Jehovah the Father says of Christ, "Behold, my servant whom I uphold, *mine elect*, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." The apostle says, of all the redeemed, Eph. i. 4, that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath chosen them in him before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love. Grace laid the first stone in the spiritual temple, and the last shall

be brought forth with shoutings of grace, grace unto it. He carries it on by *grace bestowed*, or the gift of grace. By this, more than any other method, he promotes Christ's spiritual temple. Without this, all his other plans would be inefficacious. The gift of grace includes all his saving operations. His gracious work with every individual is begun in uniting to Christ and implanting faith; and it prospers in proportion to that precious grace. He illuminates the heart; inflames it with love; and inspires it with zeal. While by his graces he builds up those in whom they flourish; he makes them instrumental in the salvation of others. A decline of love and zeal mars the work. When all seek their own things, Christ's interest will be neglected. The Redeemer's will keep pace with the effusion of the Holy Ghost as a Spirit of grace. When he is present, it will prosper. When he is provoked to depart, the progress will be retarded. Once more,

6. The Holy Spirit carries on the Redeemer's work as a *Spirit of supplication*. He is promised in this character, as well as a Spirit of grace. There is no way in which *we* can so much promote Christ's interest as by fervent prayer and wrestling. This engages Divine power and faithfulness. When the Lord is about to appear in his glory and build Zion, he will hear the prayer of the destitute. Prayer is to God's work what the hands of Moses were to Israel when fighting against Amalek. The most useful in a church and congregation is not the noisy talkative busy professor, who runs about as if every thing depended on his head and mouth, his hands and feet;

but the poor hidden believer who frequents his closet, and will neither go away without the blessing for himself, nor for Zion's sake hold his peace. Great is the power of prayer. The conversion of sinners and the edification of saints will, in general, bear proportion to the fervent wrestlings of the Lord's people. It is a certain symptom of revival when a spirit of prayer is poured from on high. When the clouds thicken, the rain approaches. On the other hand, it is a sure test of a declining church when a spirit of prayer is restrained. Christ delights to be entreated. When church members have no employment for him, he begins to go away. When those, from whom the merchant can have any expectations, are gone, and only a few children amusing themselves in the market-place, he considers exposing his wares any longer as only a loss of time, and resolves to depart.

II. It was proposed in the next place to specify a few of the excellent purposes answered by the Lord's carrying on his work in this manner—*Not by might or power, but by his own Spirit.*

1. It secures success to the work. When the Holy Spirit works none can let. If it depended on instruments, these are often weak, sometimes unwilling, and always insufficient. Though they could do more than is competent for such weak creatures, they are mortal, and die. God lives, and Zion must prosper. The work is committed to one who can never fail. He keeps his eye upon the promises, and will faith-

fully accomplish them. He knows every elect vessel, and will bring the last of them to Christ and to glory. He knows the power of sin, and will subdue it. He will communicate whatever grace is necessary. He dwells in Zion to cleanse the blood that he hath not cleansed, and Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.

2. It secures the glory to God, and makes GRACE the burden of the song. This is the great end of the whole plan of salvation; and it will be gained. Every degree of grace from conversion to glory, is for the honour of God. The Lord has formed his people for himself to show forth his praise. Sensible that he could not have delivered himself, every saint ascribes the glory to free grace. Those employed in public office are certain that they could as soon raise the dead, as translate an individual from the power of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son. Gladly would religious ministers and parents convert their connexions, but it exceeds their power. The Holy Spirit works all the work, and will bear the glory. So great a revenue of glory will accrue to him, that no just ideas can be formed of it, till we see it in a future world. Besides the power of his grace which quickens the soul and preserves it, there will be an illustrious display of infinite wisdom and care in innumerable instances, and he will be glorified by the season, as well as the event.

3. It prevents despondency in the most discouraging situation. The church and individual members are often reduced to straits which almost produce despair. Sometimes enemies cut down Zion's

carved work. Reformation once attained to is dropped and opposed. Doctrines are disregarded, and discipline is despised and neglected. Often they proceed to the hottest persecution. At other times, friends wax cold. The most spiritual decline. Their fervour abates, and their diligence is slackened. Former exertions are discontinued. In both cases, did the work depend on men, the prospect would be most distressing. The strength and activity of enemies and the languor and inactivity of friends would be equally discouraging. But, discovering the work in the hands of the Spirit, faith takes courage. Though men neither see how deliverance can be brought about, nor can accomplish it, *He* knows the manner, and is equal to the work. The deficiency of friends is always made up in him; and he can break the greatest opposition of enemies. *The godly cease.* These who have been most useful are removed. Zion trembles, and fears her loss can never be repaired. This and the other instrument is reckoned the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. The Holy Spirit can compensate the heaviest loss of this kind. He can raise up instruments equally qualified, or supply the church without them. All Israel lamented the death of Moses; but Joshua carried them unto the land of promise. Elijah dies; but a double portion of his spirit rested on Elisha. *Times are often troublous.* Even then, when the best would do little, the Holy Spirit can build the walls of Jerusalem. When Sion lies in rubbish, and no man cares for her, he can build her up, and restore her former beauty. Christ well knew that his church

would often be in a very perplexing condition; and that, reduced to the last extremity, she would be nonplussed and at her wit's end. He made ample provision in that encouraging declaration, John xiv. 16, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth." Indeed we greatly err, if we derive not all our encouragement from the Holy Spirit in the best, as well as the worst case. If matters prosper in Zion, he has done it; and if they go ill, he can rectify them, and has promised to do it.

4. Besides many other ends which might be named, the Lord takes this method that his people may always keep their eye on the word of grace, and the throne of grace. The word promises all that Sion needs. It encourages to make application. With the promise in its eye, faith cries, and prayer prevails. It cannot be otherwise. Infinite grace has made the promises, and will fulfil them. They are usually accomplished as an answer to prayer. The promises are various. They suit every condition. They secure deliverance from the hottest furnace, and a revival from the greatest declension. They ensure victory over enemies, and an increase of real friends. Were Sion to give up with every carnal scheme, and trust and plead the Divine promises, success would be certain. She would find both the truth and prosperity of the gracious declaration, that the Lord's temple will be built, and his work carried on, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.

We now proceed to the application, and from this subject we may learn,

1. That the gross of mankind are miserably mistaken about engaging in, and supporting, the Lord's work. When his truths are purely preached, and a faithful testimony maintained against prevailing corruptions, and only a few put their hands to it, the greatest part imagine that their presence and countenance would disgrace them. On this account, they can neither think of attending upon ordinances, nor supporting the good cause. Not so the Holy Spirit. He is the great agent. He is present in Sion, and supports the Lord's interest. What a source of encouragement is this to the few who engage heartily in it! Though poorly supported by men, the Spirit of God is with them, and his gracious presence can inspire them with courage under all their fears, and enable them to stem the tide of opposition. What though the mighty and wise be not for us? The Spirit is among us. Sion should still sing her celebrated song, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah."

2. That all attempts to crush the Lord's interest will prove abortive. Policy and power, malice and mischief, may all be exerted against it; but Sion is safe. Her God reigns. The people imagine a vain thing. He that sits in the heaven shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision. The Father hath set Christ king upon his holy hill. Christ pours out his Spirit. Opposition to the Lord's interest cannot eventually hurt it; but, sooner or later, will prove ruinous to all who attempt it. The Lord's

work shall subsist. It is maintained by him who has the heart of all men in his hands, and can control them as he pleases. He can disappoint all his adversaries. He can support and strengthen his people; and he will do it. He can increase grace in every heart where it is implanted; and he can convert the most unlikely. He has done great things for his church without number. He can never do worse. She should never forget his gracious assurance, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn."

3. From this subject we may also see what the friends of Sion should most dread. They ardently desire the prosperity of the Lord's work. They would do much to promote it. The support of men of distinction and ability would be the joy of their hearts. When only a few in an impoverished condition appear for its support, they tremble and are dismayed. This is what they should fear, *a provoking the Holy Ghost to depart*. Wo be to us if he leave us. While he is among us, and gives gracious countenance to his ordinances, we have no reason to be afraid. He will bless his own people, and increase their number. Often when the beginnings have been small, through his gracious aid, the latter end has greatly increased. The Holy Spirit has more at stake in the prosperity of Christ's work than all the saints together. He is sent by Christ to promote his glory, and prosper his interest. Christ has shed his blood, and the Spirit will take care that it be not shed in vain. We should pray for HIM. In the lan-

guage of the spouse, we should cry to him saying, "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out: let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." We should neither resist nor oppose him. We should cherish his motions, and not quench them.

4. We may also see the vanity and wickedness of indirect and improper means for promoting the Lord's interest. These are too often tried; but always evidence a carnal heart. They flow from unbelief and distrust. They savour of self-importance; and betray a dependance on an arm of flesh. They greatly provoke the Holy Spirit. Schemes of carnal policy for advancing the Lord's work can never be helpful, but are always hurtful. They may appear to be useful for a while; but, if indulged, will discover their pernicious effects. Time and experience might wean the church from such refuges; but the carnal heart still goes astray after its favourite objects. With the Psalmist, Sion should have all her dependance on the Lord, and her language should be, "Wait thou *only* upon God: for my expectation is from him: he *only* is my rock and my salvation, he is my defence: I shall not be moved."

5. That about the prosperity of Sion, boasting and despondency are alike excluded. Boasting is excluded by the assurance that the Lord's work is never successfully promoted by might and power. Despondency is equally excluded when the Lord assures his people that his work is carried on by his Spirit alone. Let no man glory in man. He that

glories, let him glory only in the Lord. Every way has Christ given evidence of his love to Zion, and especially in committing her to the immediate care and tuition of the Holy Spirit, when his bodily presence cannot be enjoyed by her. This proves the reality and greatness of his love; and is replete with consolation to the church, and every individual member.

Believers, you should pray for the Spirit. Others need his quickening and converting grace. You still need greater measures of his influences for promoting your sanctification. Cry for him. Quench not his motions. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of promise by whom you are sealed to the day of redemption. You can never be comfortable without him. Never forget that your comfort in general will be in proportion to your holiness. Forget not Zion. Remember her depressed condition. Pray for a revival. Insist for the former and the latter rain. Such as are in a low situation, and think they can do little for the Lord's work, should recollect that much can be done on their knees. Give the Lord no rest. Pray that he may breathe on these slain that they may live. Be encouraged. Sooner or later your believing prayers will be heard. If they should not be answered in the manner you desire, or the exact season you expect, you cannot be losers. While there is a reward of grace awaiting all the saints hereafter, the Lord's service carries a present reward in its own bosom. This is signally true of prayer. Wrestling for Zion, the soul is a gainer. Grace is exercised and increased. Pleading the promises in faith, though

in behalf of others, comforts the heart. Of all his people, none are dearer to Christ than those who prefer Jerusalem to their chiefest joy. The influence the poor wrestling saint, whose name was scarcely known, had on the Lord's word, will at last astonish the world. Pray without ceasing.

SERMON XXII.

ZECHARIAH IV. 7.

Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shall become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.

THE Lord's work will always meet with opposition. Those who engage in it should count the cost. They may expect trials from every quarter; but the Lord will stand by them. Satan and the world combine to oppose the Lord's interest. We have an instance of this in the building of the second temple. After the heathen princes, secretly influenced by Jehovah, permitted the Jews to return to their native land, and rebuild their city and temple; they met with remarkable opposition in Judea, where it might have been least expected. Tobiah, Sanballat, and others, employed every art which malice could dictate, or policy invent, to obstruct and retard the work. However, it went on. Nehemiah is perhaps the most shining and unexceptionable character recorded in the Scriptures. He was zealous, steady, and indefatigable. He endured great hardships with patience.

By every possible method he animated the builders, and encouraged them by his example. Aware that much depended on one in his station, and possessed of such endowments, he despised opposition, and said, should such a man as I fly? He was undaunted, and immoveable as a rock. Zerubbabel had a distinguished share in the work, and was greatly discouraged. In the name of the Lord, Zechariah encouraged his heart and strengthened his hands. He assured him in the preceding verse, that though the return of the Jews was not accomplished by great force, or with the pomp of a victorious army, it was brought about in a way more safe and honourable, *by the Spirit of the Lord*. He restrained the hearts of enemies, and inspired the returning captives with fortitude. By the good hand of God upon them, they reached the holy city. In the text, Zerubbabel is encouraged by a Divine assurance that the temple would be finished in spite of opposition, and the last stone brought forth with triumphant shoutings. The verse is introduced as the address of Jehovah to the enemies of the work, and expresses his majesty and power, his indignation against his enemies, and contempt of all their devices. Should they appear huge and immoveable as mountains, and stable as the rocks, before Zerubbabel the Lord shall make them a plain. The text is concluded with an assurance that, however discouraging the prospect might be at present, Zerubbabel should bring the work to an happy and honourable conclusion. Both parts of the text were designed to inspire the builders with courage: and, by the Lord's blessing, they produced

the gracious effect. The builders took courage, and persevered. The work prospered. The head-stone was brought forth, and the Jews shouted, and praised Divine grace. With some propriety, Zerubbabel has been reckoned a type of Christ. Till his second coming, the Redeemer will be employed in building his great spiritual temple. Mountains of opposition will be continually reared up to obstruct the work. They shall all be made a plain. His hand shall never be a single moment from the work till the head-stone be brought forth. Then the redeemed, with endless praise, shall shout and sing, Grace, grace!

In discoursing from these words, we propose to open the import of both clauses, and apply the subject.

I. It was proposed to take notice of some truths implied in these words, *Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.* Without restricting this clause to the immediate opposition against the building of the second temple, it imports,

1. That God has his eye upon those who oppose his work, and observes all their devices. He as it were calls them by name, and makes a home charge. Here he says, *Who art thou, O great mountain?* He is always equally acquainted with every enemy. His foes vainly imagine that "the Lord shall not see, nor the God of Jacob regard." He knows every individual among them, and all that is in his heart.

When they collect and combine, he is acquainted with their numbers, designs, and machinations, and shall defeat them all. On this head the 83d Psalm may be consulted. He knows their opposition before they are acquainted with it themselves. He watches their progress, and, in the most unexpected season, brings their counsel to nought. Plots devised with the utmost secrecy and subtlety never escape his notice. The eyes of the Lord run throughout the whole earth in behalf of his people, and are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. He knows every device of Satan, and all the motions of the sinful heart.

2. That what would be a total hinderance to Sion and the believer is nothing to Christ. So potent and mighty were the opposers of the second temple, that they reckoned the few builders would as soon move the surrounding hills as defeat their counsels. In an unbelieving hour the builders might be of the same opinion. The Redeemer intimates in the address that these enemies were nothing before HIM. The question, *who art thou?* at once expresses his own dignity and their insignificance, his power and their impotence. Often he accepts his enemies in similar language. Remarkable are those words, Isaiah xlii. 13—16, “The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. I have long time holden my peace, I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy, and devour at once. I will make waste *mountains* and *hills*, and dry up all their

herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools.”

Every obstacle in the Christian’s way to heaven, at some time or other, appears to him wholly insurmountable. Guilt stares him in the face. In point of magnitude it is like a great mountain. In respect of number, his iniquities are like the sand on the sea shore. The power of sin is strong and prevalent. The world frowns. The opposition of Satan, that strong man, is most formidable. The saint trembles. Instead of expecting victory, sometimes he looks on the cause as lost. So insignificant and unavailing are these ills of opposition before Christ, that he speaks of them with contempt and indignation. About every saint, in his own time, he addresses the mountain, and it is removed. If, with faith as a grain of mustard seed, the believer can say to this and that mountain, be thou removed and cast into the sea; with infinitely greater ease can the Author of faith cast them all away, and make them a plain. In this as well as in another sense, if he touch the mountains they vanish into smoke. If he cast forth his lightning, they are scattered; and if he shoot out his arrow, they are destroyed. His enemies can go no farther than they are permitted. Satan is chained. The human heart is under his control. All power in heaven and earth is given unto him.

3. It imports, that if the *greatest* opposition can be easily removed, the Lord’s people have no reason to fear that which is *less*. A great mountain is addressed, and enemies of less influence had reason to fear. When the eyes of the blind man were so far

opened as to see men like trees, he had the best ground to conclude that his sight would be perfected. Brought out of Egypt with an high hand, and conducted safely through the Red Sea, Israel had no reason to be alarmed by any opposition they might afterward meet with. When sin and Satan are once dethroned, the saints have no ground to fear their future attacks. If the Gospel of Christ gained ground, when Jew and Gentile conspired against his person, and seemed to prevail; the propagation and preservation of it ever after may be fully depended on. Having once begun a good work, we may be confident that Christ will perfect it in every believer. His arm is not shortened. His ear is open to the cries of the saints. He who has delivered will deliver. Having supported his people in six troubles, he will be with them in seven.

4. That opposition to the Lord's work in Zion, or the hearts of the saints, may be allowed to continue apparently insurmountable till matters come to an extremity and crisis, and *then* be instantly defeated. It was eminently so about the second temple. The devices and opposition of enemies seemed to prevail. Zion has often been brought low, before the Lord helped. Many of the saints have escaped so narrowly, as to be like brands plucked from the burning. The Assyrian army were on the very eve of taking Jerusalem, and the Lord put a hook in their nose, and turned them back. Working deliverance, when enemies are on the point of victory is highly glorifying to God. It displays his power. It is easy to quench the flame when scarcely kindled, but it re-

quires great power to extinguish a fire now burning with the utmost fury. It mortifies the enemies of Zion, and fills them with confusion. So much is this for the glory of God's power and care that he seems to rejoice in the strength and apparent prevalence of his enemies as a proper occasion of displaying his infinite perfections. These are his words, "Now will I rise, saith the Lord: now will I be exalted, now will I lift up myself. Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble; your breath of fire shall devour you. And the people shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burnt in the fire." Isai. xxxiii. 10—12. When the Lord's enemies have done their utmost, and triumphed as if victory were certain, how must they be astonished when he addresses them, as in Obadiah ver. 3, 4, "The pride of their heart hath deceived thee: thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." Deliverances in these circumstances is peculiarly sweet to believers, and encourages their faith and hope in future trials. Having the sentence of death in themselves, they trust in God who raiseth the dead. If at any future period, they know not what to do, their eyes are to the Lord.

5. This clause also implies that the very thing which the enemies of the Redeemer intend to obstruct his work, is overruled by him to promote and advance it. The great mountain is not only removed.

but made a *plain*. It was not only so levelled as the Lord's people could pass over it, but the hollow places were filled, and the whole became a patent path; and so was helpful and beneficial. This had a literal and signal accomplishment when the opposition of Tatnai and others prevailed, till it came under the cognizance of Darius, who effectually put a stop to it. He issued a decree that none should retard the work. He not only restrained the opposition of enemies, but appointed them to supply the builders, and furnish them with every thing that was requisite. We have an account of this in the sixth chapter of Ezra, which pleases and edifies the serious mind. While the whole deserves attentive consideration, we select v. 7, 8, "Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews, and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place. Moreover, I make a decree, what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews, for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered."

All opposition to the Redeemer's interest will have the same issue. It will eventually promote the work it was designed to destroy. The success of Christ's cause is represented by what he met with in his own Person. He was humbled. His dignity was veiled under a cloud, and at last he was crucified. His cause began to prosper, when his enemies thought it was destroyed. Stephen's death promoted the cause it was designed to crush. In their wars and tumults, the nations have often intended to extirpate the fol-

lowers of Christ; but their shakings have issued in the more eminent coming of him, who is the desire of all nations. The design and native tendency of error is to obscure the truth, and prevent its force. The Lord has overruled it to be the occasion of making his truths shine more conspicuously. The activity of enemies in opposing the doctrines of grace has awakened the zeal of friends to defend them. The light has shone with greater lustre, and has proved the mean of increasing the knowledge of the saints, and promoting the conversion of sinners. Satan's temptations, calculated in themselves to destroy, have proved an occasion of special comfort to the believer. That raven has helped him to many a meal. Indeed, all opposition will be made a plain. Darkness will be made light, crooked things straight, and all the paths of the Lord will be mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant.

Many other things might have been observed, but as our chief design is to open the second clause, we leave them and proceed.

II. These words, *He shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it*, among other things, imply the following :

1. The *activity* of Christ. From the time when he laid the first stone in his great spiritual temple, he will never be inactive or unemployed till the head-stone be brought forth. His *heart* is always engaged about the work. The salvation of sinners is the chief of his ways. He is straitened till it be accom-

plished. His eye is never off it for a single moment. The *eyes* of the Lord run through the earth, observing every thing that may be useful to provide and order it; and every thing which would be hurtful to prevent, and overrule it. He is the Watchman on Mount Zion, and views the whole of it at once. He observes every part of it, at every period. He keeps and waters it, night and day. He never slumbers nor sleeps. His *hand* is never from the work. Were it withdrawn for a single moment, instead of making progress, the edifice would tumble into ruin. His omnipotent arm preserves what is already built from the violence of the storm, and the destructive hand of every foe. He places new stones and forwards the work. Sinners are gathered in, and saints built up and established. Without his arm all endeavours to build the work would be in vain. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain." The presence and power of his almighty arm is sometimes more, and sometimes less observed. Faith alone can discern it. When we look by faith, we will never find him absent, or unconcerned. He is appointed by the Father to build the spiritual temple, and all he does in that arduous work is the execution of his great mediatory office. He will execute it with the greatest fidelity. He is faithful to him who appointed him. If Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant; much more Christ as a Son over his own house. The work shall prosper. Hell and earth cannot prevail against it. Christ will say at last, Of all whom thou hast given

me I have lost none ; and every individual among the redeemed will shout, and cry Grace, grace.

2. His *perseverance*. The Lord is a rock, and his work is perfect. As he prosecuted his work in purchasing redemption, and never gave over till he could say, It is finished, he will equally persevere in the application. His blood will not be shed in vain ; but shall be sprinkled on all for whom he laid down his life. Many things might induce him to desist from the work. His friends, for whom he has done so much, are often careless, and provoke him. He is pressed under the sins of a professing people, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves. The love of many waxes cold. Though the meekest of all men, the typical mediator was wearied out with the obstinacy of Israel, though he had only the charge of them for about forty years. He wished to resign. Christ's patience *even* with his own people is infinite and inexhaustible. While friends provoke, enemies oppose him. Their opposition is unremitting in every place and period where he builds. Like Nchemiah, he has to fight as well as build, and be equally active night and day. As the Gospel is the great instrument for promoting his work ; and as the blessings of the New Covenant, with the influences of the Spirit, are necessary to make it effectual, Christ's perseverance includes the outward dispensation of the first, and the continued communication of the last.

3. The *perfection* of the work. Once begun, it will be performed to the day of Jesus. There is a period when the work will be perfect, which is justly called

the day of the Lord. *Then* his purpose will be accomplished, and his promises confirmed, his work will be finished, and his people happy. That day was in his eye when he undertook the work, and in all his subsequent trouble and toil. Bringing forth the top or head-stone is the perfection of the work. This is a copious theme, including many precious articles. Every believer must receive the last blessing on ordinances and providential dispensations. The last degree of grace must be bestowed here, and the heavenly crown hereafter. All his people must be delivered from the least remainder of sin, and from its inbeing. They must be made perfect in holiness, and fully conformed to himself. Putting on the top-stone includes the conversion of the last elect vessel, and meetening him for glory; the winding up of Providence to the church below, and translating her from earth to heaven; the resurrection of the dead, and the reception of the saints into glory. Nothing will be left undone of all that he has purposed and promised, or which is beneficial or requisite to his people.

4. The public and triumphant *conclusion* of the work. The height of the last stone makes it visible, and the shoutings proclaim the triumph. The public conclusion of the work respects every believer, and the whole church. The crown of righteousness will be bestowed, and put on the head of every saint in a *public* and *visible* manner in the other world. Christ stands ready to receive him, and confesses him before his Father. The angels attend, and introduce him into the far country. Enemies pursue him to the

very gates of heaven. The souls of just men, already made perfect, and in possession of the mansions in their Father's house, hail his happy arrival. He is publicly crowned in the other world. Sometimes a degree of publicity about the coronation of the saint reaches even this world. There is often something about the death of the saints, which attracts the attention of all around, and testifies whom they have served, and what will be their reward. The everlasting arms are underneath them, and they are supported. Amidst their severest sufferings, and waiting the Lord's time, they are endowed with astonishing patience. They have communications of light and power superior to what is usually enjoyed by Christians in the smoother steps of prosperity and peace. These dispel the gloom which might otherwise hang over their dying hours. Contemplating the approach of death, a new world opens upon them. They seem to stand upon the threshold of heaven. Instead of shrinking at the king of terrors, they look out for his approach. They long for the coming of their Lord, and cry, why tarry his chariot wheels. High in faith and hopes, like the sun, they seem larger at their setting.

And all their prospects brightening to the last,
Their heaven commences ere the world be past !

But though the exercise of dying saints should not be so visible to others, Christ has made the nature of their exit out of this world, and their entrance into the other, public in his word. Whether it be credited or not, he has assured us where they are

going, and called us carefully to mark their latter end. In reference to the church at large, nothing can be more public than bringing forth the headstone. The Lord Jesus will come in the clouds. The trumpet sounds before him, and thousands of angels are in his train. The quick and the dead shall be judged. The universe shall stand before him. The sheep shall be placed on his right-hand, and the goats on the left. A sentence, full of condescension, and public in the highest degree, shall be pronounced in the ears of the redeemed, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

The conclusion will be *triumphant*. Christ is opposed in every part of his work, and in every part he conquers and triumphs. He triumphs over Satan. He conquered in the wilderness, and triumphed on the cross. He spoiled principalities, and made a show of them openly. Grace overcomes corruption, and rejoices over it. How triumphant must the Redeemer and his people appear when all their enemies are finally defeated! In the most exalted strains they will then sing, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" If there is now joy in heaven over one repenting sinner, how will it resound with acclamations when every mansion in glory will be occupied by its rightful possessor! Then all the Redeemer's enemies without exception will be made his footstool, and death and hell will be cast into the lake of fire. If Israel sung the song of Moses after their celebrated passage through the Red Sea; sure, the heirs of glory when safely wasted

over Jordan, and introduced into their Father's house, will sing the song of the Lamb in the most elevated strains, and with raptures of joy far above our present conceptions. Then the redeemed of the Lord will give thanks unto him because he is good, and because his mercy endureth for ever. Then will be sung in the highest perfection that triumphant song, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

5. The *acceptance* of the Redeemer's work. There seems to be an allusion in the text to a custom of laying the foundation, and putting on the top-stone in the presence of the proprietors or some peculiarly interested in the work. Christ is God's honorary servant. He chose him for the great work. He gave him Zion and every saint. He invested him with all authority and power. He rejoiced in him from eternity as the surety and substitute of sinners. The Father declared his infinite satisfaction when Christ was laid as the foundation stone in Zion, in the promises and types. When he appeared in person, he bare honourable testimony to him at his incarnation and baptism. He gave the highest evidence when Christ was on the cross, that the work of redemption, then finished, was most acceptable to him. When he raised him from the dead, and poured out the Spirit at Pentecost, he gave incontestable proof of his infinite satisfaction. He affords a permanent proof in the daily acceptance of believers, and their final reception to glory. But when the work shall be finished,

and all the given number introduced into the palace of the King, the head-stone brought forth, and the kingdom delivered up to the Father; the joyful declaration of acceptance, and the many evidences of it, infinitely surpass our conceptions. Justly do the angels reckon themselves interested in the Redeemer's work and the acceptance of it. Made and preserved by him, and unceasingly employed in adoring him, they are enflamed with love to his person and zeal for his interest. They rejoice in the conversion of one sinner; and will join with ineffable joy in the universal chorus, when all the saints to whom they have been ministering spirits are safely brought home to glory. The redeemed are still more interested. The success and acceptance of Christ's work was their chief concern in this world. With infinite joy will they participate in the acclamations of praise, when the work is finished, and the acceptance publicly announced before an assembled world.

6. These words imply the *joyful ascription of praise* in loud and exalted acclamations for the whole of the work, and especially *as concluded*. Christ will receive a revenue of glory for every part of his work, and is infinitely worthy of it. He deserves to be praised for undertaking it, and it is ground of lamentation that the church militant is frequently too sparing in ascribing to him the glory that is due. His continued presence and care, while the work is going on, should be constantly celebrated; but often Zion's songs are marred through unbelief and opposition. In a foreign land she hangs her harps on the willows. When a glorious work has met with continued opposition, and

is finished in spite of every enemy, the conclusion naturally makes all who were friendly to and engaged in it, break forth with bursts of joy, and give full vent to the pleasing sensations of their hearts. It must be so with the Redeemer's work. There is an obvious difference between his work and every other. As it goes on, it both qualifies his friends for praising him, and inclines them to the exercise. The completion of it removes every hinderance, and fits them for praising in the most perfect manner. It enlarges their capacities, and makes them as holy as extensive. As Divine grace is the matter of the song, it likewise opens their mouths, and enables them to sing.

7. That while all the Divine perfections are celebrated, GRACE is praised in a peculiar and distinguished manner. When the head-stone is brought forth, one sound only is heard—*Grace, grace unto it.* All God's perfections are celebrated. One cannot be praised without the rest. In the plan of redemption they sweetly harmonize. "Mercy and truth met together; righteousness and peace kissed each other." God's great and ultimate end in the salvation of sinners was his own glory and the manifestation of all his perfections. His power is displayed. His wisdom shines illustriously. His holiness is magnified, and his justice honoured. Christ and his Gospel are called the power and the wisdom of God. His grace is celebrated in a peculiar manner. When exhorted, in Psal. xcvi. to sing a new song to the Lord, it is a leading part of the subject, that he has been mindful of his grace and truth. These are two

leading articles, and Grace is the first. It is no wonder that Divine grace should be extolled in a peculiar manner. It was sovereign and free grace which made choice of the Saviour, and made him consent to undertake the arduous work. The same grace chose the sinner, subdued his obstinacy, and procured his consent. Grace sends the means wherever they go. The good work begins in grace; and grace will be perfected in glory. The peculiar celebration of Divine grace at the consummation of Christ's work was typified in Israel's song, Psal. cxxxvi. commemorating their glorious deliverance from Egyptian slavery and bondage, the burden of which is, *for his mercy endureth for ever.*

8. That the redeemed have lively heart-affecting views that Christ's spiritual work is wholly of grace, and solemnly renounce every degree of merit. *Salvation is of grace.* The whole building corresponds with the head-stone. Grace could never cement, either at top or bottom, with any thing contrary to itself. A foundation of merit, instead of carrying a top-stone of grace, would spurn at it; and a top-stone of grace would refuse to be laid on a foundation of works. Their irreconcilable contrariety is expressed by the apostle in the strongest terms, Rom. xi. 6, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." At the conclusion of Christ's work, the Redeemed will have *the most heart-affecting views of that grace which saved them.* Even in this world, with much sin about them, their hearts have often been melted

with a sense of the Lord's loving-kindness. His unsolicited and free love affects them in the most feeling manner, and they are overwhelmed with the thoughts of his goodness. Recollecting their condition in a state of nature, and their multiplied transgressions, their aggravated guilt and their redemption by the blood of Christ, they cry, Is this the manner of man! But grace in its true dignity, real value, and amazing effects, is never fully discovered till seen in the light of glory. Then the ransomed of the Lord know him and themselves infinitely better, and that knowledge magnifies his grace. Around the throne, acquitted and glorified, they drink full draughts of living waters without interruption, and eternally celebrate redeeming grace and love in the most joyful acclamations. There is a *public solemn renunciation of merit*. When the temple was finished, by their shoutings of Grace, grace to the head-stone, the Jews publicly acknowledged that the work prospered and was concluded, not by their wisdom or strength, but by the power and grace of God. Renunciation of merit, or self-denial, is the first lesson which the Christian learns. In heaven his knowledge is most perfect. There self never enters, and merit is renounced. Then, fully sensible that grace alone contrived the whole method of salvation; that grace took them from a fearful pit and miry clay; that grace conducted them in every step of their wilderness journey; that grace preserved them in the swellings of Jordan; and that grace ministered an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of their Lord and

Saviour Jesus Christ—they shout and sing GRACE, GRACE!

9. The perfect *satisfaction* of the redeemed with every *prior part* of the work, and a *public avowal* of it flowing from the fulness of the heart. The triumphant acclamations proclaim their satisfaction. In this state of obscurity and darkness, before the building is completely finished, the saints are apt to err, and, through mistaken views, often put harsh constructions on the Lord's procedure. They are partly self-wise and self-willed. Partial to the flesh, and influenced by it, they are dissatisfied with their lot, and conclude that all things are against them, though they are directly intended for their spiritual benefit, and will infallibly promote it. Often they repine when they should rejoice, and murmur when they ought to be thankful. The light of glory will discover the propriety of every providential dispensation. They will be satisfied that love was the source from which their trials flowed, and that infinite wisdom and care directed their passage through life. Without the least hesitation, they will be persuaded that he hath done all things well. With exuberant joy they will remember all the way which the Lord their God led them in the wilderness, to humble and prove them, to know what was in their heart, and do them good at their latter end. Every one recollects with infinite complacency the pains the Lord was at with him to prepare him for being a pillar in the temple above. He remembers the nature, measure, and continuance of his trials, and is satisfied that

they were all necessary. With joyful acclamation he acknowledges that neither less, nor any other, trials would have done. This avowal to the praise of grace is neither forced nor feigned. It flows from the abundance of the heart deeply impressed with the infinite wisdom and love, which *now* shine so illustriously in all the Lord's procedure. The race is ended. The prize is won. Christ is enjoyed. distance and absence are for ever removed. The fatigue is forgotten. Preceding pain is swallowed up in permanent pleasure. Sorrow and sighing for ever fly away. They enter into joy—joy unspeakable.

Once more, these words imply the universality and perpetuity of the praise. When the head-stone is brought forth, the shoutings will be *universal*. As the mouths of all his enemies will be stopped at the completion of the work; his friends without exception will have theirs opened. The chorus will be general. No voice will be low or unobserved. As they will *all* with open mouth proclaim the praises of his grace. Every one will have sufficient matter of praise in his own redemption, and, instead of paying, will eternally sink deeper in debt to Divine grace. Loaded with the Lord's benefits, he will eternally labour under the agreeable weight which both overwhelms and supports him. They will all praise for one another; and, with hearts and voice eternally in unison, celebrate redeeming love. The praise will be *perpetual*. When the last stone is laid, they will eternally shout Grace, grace. They have nothing else to say. They will not say less; and they can-

not say more. They will praise with all their hearts, and while they have any being. Their admiration and enjoyment will be endless, and their songs of praise will never cease. Their continued enjoyments will never cloy, and their endless acclamations will be always with equal fervour. Their enjoyments will be always fresh and new; and their strength and spirits in the fullest vigour! The object of praise will ever be before them, and his everlasting love will constitute their happiness, and fill them with delight. Heaven will be an eternal jubilee of rest and shouting. There they sing the song that never ends.

It now remains to make some application; and,

1. We have the highest security that all opposition to the Lord's work, whether outward or inward, will be in vain. The greatest mountain shall be a plain. The Lord has said it. He has sworn it. He has given many proofs of it. Heaven and earth may pass away, but his work shall prosper. The stars have fought against his enemies, and the sun has stood still that his people might be avenged of their foes. Zion hill can never be moved. Jerusalem shall continue. The election shall obtain. Sin shall not have dominion. The God of peace shall bruise Satan. Though his enemies should prevail for a season, they shall fall. Christ shall reign till they be made his footstool. God is able to bring them down. His glory is concerned. While grace is in his heart, his people shall be blest, and his work shall prosper. We have,

2. The way in which guilty sinners can be saved. By grace they are saved. This is the only way, and it is open to all. The least sinner can *only* be saved by grace; and grace *can* save the chief of sinners.

All are invited in the Gospel. Him that cometh, grace will receive, and Christ will not cast off. All who follow an opposite course, instead of building, are pulling down the Lord's temple. No method of opposition is more dishonouring to Christ, or ruining to sinners, than free will or good works. These are diametrically opposite to grace, and inimical in the highest degree. Grace opens a door of hope to the chief of sinners. If it should be objected, "that grace only saves them who receive it when offered, and believe when they hear; but I have long trampled on it and refused it; it should be remembered that it is the nature and glory of grace, not to pardon *some* sins only, but *every* sin. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin; and some sinners of every description will at last join in shouting, Grace, grace.

3. The reason why sinners under the Gospel perish. It is not that grace cannot save them, for it is almighty. It is not that it will not save them, for then it would cease to be grace. It is not that others are preferred; were this the reason, grace would be no more free. It is not because grace is out of their reach; it is brought near in the Gospel. They do not perish because they are not invited; the Saviour in his grace says, Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved. It is not because they have ground to doubt about the sincerity of the offer. We cannot hesitate a moment about the sincerity of him

who laid down his life, and beseeches sinners to be reconciled. But Gospel hearers perish because they *wilfully neglect and despise* salvation by free grace. Now as well as formerly Christ has reason for the complaint, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." What can sinners object to this method of salvation? It gives God the glory, and saves the sinner. How can you escape, if you neglect so great salvation? Consider. Be wise. Now is the accepted time. Receive not the grace of God in vain. You are called; Christ now waits for your answer. In a little you must appear before him to receive your sentence and doom. Think on eternity. Compare the torments of hell with the exercise and enjoyments of heaven. Those who perish have nothing but weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth; but the saints will eternally enjoy God, and praise his grace.

In fine, from this subject believers may learn when they are most meet for heaven, and have the best evidence that they shall be brought into the palace of the King. It is when they are most employed in adoring and admiring Divine grace. We are fitted and qualified for the enjoyment and exercises of the redeemed above in proportion to our receiving and improving the Lord's grace below. In heaven the saints will be swallowed up in eternal admiration of Divine grace. We should not be slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises. If the Lord's people would form any just conceptions of the exercise and employ of heaven, they should reflect on those seasons when they were admitted to the greatest nearness and

familiarity to God. Then, abstracted from the world, sovereign and free grace occupied their attention, impressed their minds, and ravished their heart. Believing the promises, and invigorated to see their names in the Lamb's book of life, pouring out their hearts to God, and tasting the comforts of the Holy Ghost, they have been filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. These are their best seasons and sweetest enjoyments. They are the gate of heaven, but inconceivably short of future glory. Heaven will be a great surprise to all who reach it! After all they have heard and enjoyed, they will find their ideas have been low, disproportionate, and inadequate; and that heaven has been indeed within the veil! Courage, O believer, your warfare will be accomplished. Your trials will be ended. Your enemies will be conquered, and you will be crowned. You shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Heaven will compensate all your troubles. Grace will save you, and you shall praise grace. Christ will bring forth the headstone, and then, in conjunction with all the redeemed, to eternity, you will shout and sing **GRACE, GRACE UNTO IT!!**

CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN THE

REV. WILLIAM BARLASS

AND

THE REV. JOHN NEWTON,

LATE RECTOR OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

LOMBARD-STREET, LONDON.

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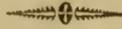
PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

PHYSICS 101

LECTURE 1

MECHANICS

CORRESPONDENCE.



MR. WM. BARLASS TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Rev. Sir,

YOU will no doubt be surprised to find an obscure stranger, living in another nation, addressing you. That you may no longer be in suspense, I shall so far invert the usual order of epistles, as to tell you here, that I am a student belonging to the Antiburgher Synod in Scotland. It may indeed appear rashness and presumption, for one so very mean and unworthy as I am, to trouble you, who already are, no doubt, encumbered with a very large circle of correspondents, and these, men moving in far higher spheres, of greatly superior abilities, and exceedingly more deserving of your regard. But I beg leave to assure you, that nothing but the very high esteem and regard which I entertain for you would have ever suggested the thought of writing you, and nothing but the modest humble spirit which breathes in your writings could have prevailed upon me to execute my purpose. This convinces me that at least you will not be displeased. I am persuaded, that you very sincerely love all those who love our Lord Jesus, without any undue respect to the party with which they are connected, the station of life in which Divine Providence has placed them, or that corner of the world where their lot is fallen.

Do you inquire what is the occasion of my writing you? I can only say, that it is to testify the very great esteem I have for you as an instrument in God's hand of reviving his truth, when so generally despised by a self-wise and blind generation; and humbly, though very earnestly, beseech you to proceed as far as possible in your writings. I have not the least doubt but God is blessing your ministerial labours in that plot of his vineyard where he has fixed your residence; but I hope his blessing will by no means be confined to it, but will diffuse itself about wherever your works go. God appoints certain bounds to books as well as men. A great man having wrote, in our country, in defence of the truth, at the dawn

of the Reformation, the people urged to preach the same doctrine publicly: Sir, said they, we cannot all read your writings, but we can all hear your preaching. With respect to you, Sir, this I must invert; We cannot all hear your discourses from the pulpit, but when published we can read them in our own closet. You are not, I perceive, so fond of books yourself as many good men have been. You delight too much in the pure fountain, the law of the Lord, to be greatly enamoured with the streams which are often tinged with the mud of human imperfections. But you well know, Sir, that it is not the happiness of every one to see so far and so clearly into the word of God, at first view, as you do. The Lord has various ways of bringing his people to the knowledge and love of the truth. Some he teaches more immediately by the word *itself*: some by the opening and applying of it in the preaching of the Gospel; others by the writings of holy and learned men leading them back to the Scriptures, the great source of all that is truly valuable in such labours. The Bible is the delight and joy of every true believer. It is the grand medium whereby God communicates light, life, strength, and consolation to his people. But, according to his adorable sovereignty, God takes one by the hand himself, and leads him into those green pastures, while he uses the preaching, conversation, or writings of his servants as the more immediate means of leading another into the same field.

Do you ask, why I am so desirous to see more of your writings? It is because I hope they will be of the same kind, if not still more excellent, than those which have already appeared. In those already published, there is that conformity to the sacred oracles in the sentiment, that ease and simplicity in the manner, and that agreeable variety in the subjects treated, which will render them generally acceptable, and generally useful among those who are not ashamed of the simplicity and plainness of the Gospel: and I hope God will not suffer them to be without effect, even on those who are yet strangers, and so enemies to the doctrines of grace. The experience of thousands now in glory can attest the utility of human writings, when, like yours, all their beauty, force, and value flow from the great original, the Scriptures.

The more I read, the more I admire every thing of yours, which has yet come to my hand. Your writings are free of those noxious qualities which too often spoil the labours of otherwise very emi-

nent Divines. No affected warmth, no lumber of cold, uninteresting digressions, no subtle, unintelligible intricacies, no pomp of unmeaning words, no parade of human learning, no ill-natured reflections, no violent party spirit, tarnish your page. It is a mixture of these which renders the writings of some, much versant in the Scriptures, very unlike that pattern after which they should copy. Even persons enlightened by the Divine Spirit are subject to these errors. One thing I highly esteem in you is, that, while you keep off the rock of a narrow spirit, and its never-failing attendant, a contentious disproportionate zeal, you do not, as most men in this age, split on the opposite one, a lukewarm indifference for the truths of the Gospel. I cannot, on any account, like their spirit, who, under pretence of candour and charity, (things much cried up, but little known, and far less practised) would jumble all professing Christians into one mass. Were this the case, I am afraid this huge lump would contain so much corrupt leaven as soon to infect the whole. Neither is their conduct to be commended, who, though they attach themselves to that party which they think purest, yet are so excessively cautious, or unreasonably timid, as either to comply with unpalatable doctrines, or else utter their mind with such diffidence and ambiguity as rather injures than promotes the cause of truth. Men of this stamp are surely ashamed, in part at least, of Christ's Gospel; and are too fond of the praise of men. Does God clothe his servants with power and might to whisper in such a soft, ambiguous tone as will please every body? By no means; but that they may lift up their voice like a trumpet, and boldly declare truth and error, sin and duty. There is, sure, the greatest consistency between contending earnestly for the faith, and yet possessing that meek, calm, heavenly temper which is at once an ornament to, and certain evidence of, genuine Christianity. It is indeed difficult for us, who are so weak and so ready to be tossed to extremes, to prevent our zeal rising to anger and fury, or, on the other hand, degenerating into indifference. Nay: it is absolutely impossible for us to keep in such a narrow path. A Divine hand only can preserve us in it. The greatest men whom God has raised up in his church have been, in every age, varying to one or other of these extremes. Happy would it be for us, if, by their example, we could learn to trust to the Lord, and not lean to our own understanding!

I know, from the peculiar modesty which I discern in you, that you will think I speak too highly of your works. I do frankly acknowledge that I never was so fond of, and perhaps never profited so much from, any human compositions as yours. In every case I detest flattery, and would not, durst not use it with you. But I am not afraid to speak as I have done, because I well know you will ascribe all the glory to its due Author, and abhor the very thought of sharing the least degree of it with him. We all hold of Christ, who distributes at his pleasure. Some believers long ago glorified God in Paul; I and others surely may warrantably glorify him in you. Much sin has been forgiven you; many deliverances have been wrought for you; great grace has been bestowed on you; and I hope great and remarkable will be the advantage which the church of God shall reap from your labours of love. God has not done so great things for you for nought, in bringing you through such dangers, and turning you from such Atheism to such a settled faith in that record which God has given of his Son. He no doubt designed you to be a living and very visible instance of free, sovereign, distinguishing grace, and therefore a warm, zealous defender of those doctrines which are calculated to exalt the Saviour, humble the sinner, and so lay a foundation for true Gospel holiness. You have the word of God verified and explained in your own experience, and may justly say what we have heard and learned from the infallible oracles; what we have also clearly seen and felt in our own soul, that declare we unto you. Luther very often insists on it as one great leading cause why his adversaries could not understand the doctrines of the Gospel, that they had never felt them verified in their own experience. I have often observed a remarkable coincidence of sentiments between you and him, though your mode of expression differs very much from his. He seems to have obtained the greatest and best part of his learning in the school of experience, and in this I suppose you pretty much resemble him. If he was a great deal rougher in his language, the times in which he lived needed (as one of his cotemporaries observed) a severe and sharp physician.

I am sorry your works are as yet so little known in our country; I hope, however, they will not be long so. I have ever since I was acquainted with them, used all my influence in getting them read; and have recommended them to all my acquaintances. A number

of ministers have now got acquainted with them, who will recommend them to others, and also the laity.

Books of practical religion published with you have little run here, till they are reprinted in our own country. All of yours which I have yet seen is the Authentic Narrative; the first vol. of the Ecclesiastical Review; Omicron's Letters, and one volume of Sermons.

The Authentic Narrative is indeed a very surprising narrative! You would have been much to blame had you put such a candle under a bushel. I am the more delighted with the modest air in it, that it so seldom is to be found in books of this kind. We are often ready to cry, Is the Lord's hand shortened that it cannot save? is his mercy clean gone? But God has added in you one to the many instances of the sovereignty and greatness of his grace, in saving from the very lowest deeps of misery. One thing I beg leave to hint is, that I am afraid your very great modesty has deprived us of some more valuable letters on that subject. Might you not have added, may you not yet add, a few letters on the period intervening between your remarkable change and your entry upon the ministry? They might, perhaps, not be so surprising as those we have, but on that account not the less edifying. It would be very agreeable to me and others to learn *how and by what means* you arrived at such clear views of the Gospel doctrine, and such an extensive acquaintance with the sentiments of both enemies and friends. Ambition often obtrudes unworthy performances upon the public: humility *sometimes* hides precious and rich treasures in the earth.

Might not Omicron produce another volume of his sweet instructive letters. That book, next to the Greek New Testament, shall be my Vade Mecum. Every time I read it (and if you knew how often you would pronounce me whimsical) I cannot help thinking, and saying, 'Tis pity Mr. Newton should do any thing but write letters; I wish to know his mind on every subject; and there are many subjects of equal importance still remaining. I would be happier than I can well express to hear that you were proceeding in your Ecclesiastical Review. The work to be sure is arduous, but the effects, I dare say, will be proportionally great and happy. The church histories which we have, are generally rather learned than pious; fuller of bones than meat. But why compare your Review with these dry histories. Your intention is quite different;

so is your plan and execution. Some have huddled together materials for a work of this kind : but it would require one who could discern the operations of the Lord's hand to put them together in such a manner as God might be glorified and the church edified. The writer of church history should, of all men, be the most careful and diligent observer of Providence. This I am sure you have been. I desire to bless God for what he has already enabled you to do. The period you have got over is doubtless the most important. The succeeding ages, however, will afford abundant matter for useful reflections, and particularly the era of the Reformation. The history of this glorious period is wickedly aspersed by some ; misrepresented by many, and rightly understood by few.

It gives me much pleasure to find that God is still raising up and maintaining some witnesses for the purity of the Gospel in the corrupt Church of England. I am afraid too many of your ministers have sided for some time past with the Arminians. The Thirty-nine Articles have been abused and insulted. The writings of the worthy Reformers in the reigns of Elizabeth and James have been neglected, while the heterodoxies of Burnet and Whitby, or the still more loose and incoherent stuff of some modern writers, have been admired and copied.

Mr. Toplady's History of the Calvinism of the Church of England is a standing witness against her present clergy ! But, alas ! our own church in this land is little better. She is torn to pieces by dissensions. She is overrun with heresy. Her hedge of discipline is pulled down. Wild beasts make her their prey. Some pulpits whisper Arminianism. From others proceed loud Socinian blasphemies. Very few are free from the Neonomian scheme. Still indeed there are a number of ministers in her who are servants of Jesus. Of these some are more, some less, faithful. But they are constantly on the decrease. If an orthodox, religious minister dies, generally the patron thrusts in one whom none but a few, and those the worst in the parish, will hear. The General Assembly is exceeding tame. A few dissenting voices are despised. The majority are not only inclined to bear, but seem to take pleasure in carrying whatever burdens the civil power thinks fit to impose ; they even add new ones.

The parties which have left her communion are chiefly these three : the Burgher and Antiburgher Synods, and the Presbytery of

Relief. The last can hardly be said to have gone so far ; only they have erected meeting-houses distinct from the parish church, and they are more orthodox than the generality of the established church. The other two are strictly distinct bodies, and both hold by the Westminster Confession. You will certainly have heard of the Secession (for so are they called) in Scotland. Perhaps your information may have been only by the roar of malevolence. We are accused of ignorance and bigotry. That we know too little, is too true ; that some may be too narrow-minded and bigoted may be equally true. But we little deserve these accusations from those who are most liberal of them. But if you should condescend to answer this with a few lines, and if you desire it, in my next I would endeavour, as far as I could, to give you the true state of the secession, and religion, and the cause of truth among their hands. Then I will show how far these charges are just.

I must beg, my much esteemed Sir, your excuse for my extreme prolixity. It was after very long hesitation that I ventured to write you at all. However, after once beginning, with the greatest pleasure, and insensibly I run out this length ; and should gladly do the same at another time, were any thing I can say in the least agreeable to you. I am not impudent enough to beg a place among your correspondents. That honour would be too great for me ; and perhaps your circle will already be enlarged enough. But if your other more important avocations would for once permit you to return a few lines, they would be esteemed a very high favour. You are the first I ever wrote to with whom I have not a personal acquaintance ; only real regard and the highest esteem would have prevailed on me. I would be glad to hear if you are publishing any thing, and on what subjects. Does the number of Calvinists increase in the Church of England ? Are the doctrines of grace attended with any remarkable effects where they are preached ? Is there a friendly correspondence and harmony among such as are reputed Calvinists ? Is Mr. Haweis still alive, and where ? Is Mrs. Newton still living, and well ? A few hints relative to these, or any thing else remarkable with you, and also to hear of your own personal welfare, would exceedingly oblige me. I sincerely wish you much Divine assistance in your great work.

MR. WM. BARLASS TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Rev. and very dear Sir,

YOUR letter, with which I was duly favoured, gave me the greatest pleasure. I know not how much I am obliged to you for cheerfully accepting a correspondence with me. Self-conceit never once would have whispered that I deserved it. As to your *condition*, I beg leave once for all to assure you, that I did not say, and never *can* say, the half of what I thought : but rather than lose such a valuable correspondent, I shall endeavour strictly to observe this condition, though it will be hard enough, for in every thing it will hold true, that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and the pen will write. I hope, however, any thing said did not offend delicacy. Mrs. Newton's welfare makes me exceedingly happy. I sincerely wish she and you may be long spared for mutual blessings and comforts to one another, and to the country about. If I had known she had had a sister so near, I certainly would have been acquainted with her, though good breeding should have suffered a little. I was in the East Country not long before I wrote you last. I then hinted my design of leaving Paisley, which my heart was much set on, but through the importunity of friends I condescended to stay some time longer. How long I cannot say. This way I cannot get near Anstruther till harvest, when I shall, with the greatest pleasure wait on Mrs. Cunningham. Would like to hear of Mr. Haweis getting the better of his complaint. I esteem Mr. Haweis. Every town where Christ has a friend, will get a visit on his account—then happy Olney, where so many real-Christians live and pray, and where Mr. Newton is! Am very sorry that you have no views of proceeding in the history—if they might be told, would like to know the reasons. Would like the rest of the letters published as soon as possible. When I wrote you last I had not seen any hymns. I have since seen a specimen in the third edition of Omicron's Letters. They please me much. I am happy to tell you that your works are very much sought for and read since I wrote last.

I am very glad that you are disposed to inquire into the principles of Seceders, and if it were in my power I would be particularly glad to offer you some hints, which might be of use to give you some notion of the difference between the Burghers and Anti-

burghers. It will be necessary in the first place to say something of the Secession testimony. It is a testimony against the manner of settling religion in Scotland at the Revolution. Then the Lord wrought a wonderful deliverance for us, but we sadly misimproved it. It is a branch of Presbyterian principles, that the government of the church by Presbytery is the only form of government that Christ has appointed in his house; being equally removed from lordly domination, and from popular disorder. But by the act of settlement, Presbytery was established in Scotland upon this principle, that there is no fixed form of church government appointed in the word of God; that several forms of it may be agreeable to the Scripture, and that Presbytery was preferable in Scotland only for a political reason, because the most agreeable to the genius and inclinations of the people. This is one reason why Seceders disapprove of the manner of settling religion at the Revolution. Presbyterians look upon the intrinsic power of the church as an invaluable trust committed to her, which she is never to give up to the greatest prince, or the greatest prelate, under heaven. It is a power of preaching the word, of exercising discipline and government without being accountable to the civil magistrate. The church, according to the principles of Presbyterians, knows no head besides Christ. But at the Revolution the intrinsic power of the church was in part given up to the king, in regard that he, or his commissioner, were allowed by that settlement to specify the time and place for the meeting of her assemblies. It is obvious, that this renders it easy for the magistrate to impede or interrupt the proceedings of her judicatures. Seceders think it necessary to testify against this, in order to hold fast the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free. Besides, Seceders hold it to be a duty, enjoined by the word of God, for a people in their social capacity, whether many or few, to enter into a public oath and covenant, avouching the Lord to be their God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments. This was a moral duty under the Old Testament, enjoined upon moral grounds, and therefore is of perpetual obligation. This duty was quite neglected by the Church of Scotland after the Revolution, though it was a piece of reformation she had attained to in former times. Seceders complain of this in their testimony—complain that the church rather went back, than set forward in reformation.

Many things fell out afterward which furnished too much matter of testimony. Seceders testify against the union between the two nations, because the support of the Church of England, with her hierarchy and all her ceremonies, is an article of it. When Presbyterians gave their consent to this article, they consented to support what, according to their professed principles, is contrary to the word of God, and consequently sinful.

Presbyterians look upon it as a very distinguished privilege of the church of Christ, that the people have a right to choose their own pastors—to try the spirits whether they be of God. But the Church of Scotland was deprived of this right by the act restoring lay patronages: and her courts of judicature, instead of seeking the repeal of this act, have promoted the execution of it in all its rigour, disregarding the complaints of the people, and deciding every contested settlement in favour of the patron's pretensions. Instances of this could be mentioned, which would amaze you. The people of a parish not far distant struggled in the keenest manner against the presentee for seven years—at last he was settled, and like many others, commenced stipend gatherer. By the by, patronage has always been reckoned a greater grievance, and more sensibly felt in Scotland than England. The people had been always accustomed to choose their ministers. A presentation has been such an odious thing here that scarcely ever one good man accepted it.

Seceders testify against the decision of the General Assembly about a book called the Marrow of Modern Divinity, which no doubt you will have seen; they have no peculiar attachment to it, as if it were a standard. Many good Seceders have never seen it. But they think it their duty to adhere to several important doctrines, which were either openly condemned or darkened by that assembly, such as, the freedom of a believer from the law as a covenant of works; his freedom from a slavish spirit; the particular appropriation of faith; the free, unlimited, unconditional offer of Christ in the Gospel to sinners of mankind as such, the unconditionality of the covenant of grace, &c. &c. The assembly condemned these truths in the year 1721, if I mind right. This is a very material part of the testimony of Seceders. The controversy was much the same with that which happened soon after the Revolution among the Dissenters about the city of London.

As the judicatures of this church were forward in condemning these truths, they were as backward to censure the erroneous. They have, at times, though their crimes were great, been dismissed with little censure, or rather commendations. A volume scarcely could contain an enumeration of particular instances. Two were much taken notice of, as they soon followed the condemnation of the above truths in the Marrow, happened about the beginning of the secession, and were among the first of the kind that took place in the Church of Scotland. The first instance was that of Mr. Simson. To say nothing of his opposition to the great doctrines of the Gospel, he was a bold subtle Arian; and yet was dismissed after a very long process with only a suspension from his teaching as divinity professor. The other was of Mr. Campbell, professor in the university of St. Andrews. This man boldly avowed that *self-love* was the *sole* motive of all virtuous and religious actions. The assembly approved of Mr. Campbell's explanation of his opinion with regard to the motive of virtuous actions, which was, according to him, not the glory of God, but our delight in it.

It was the conduct of the judicatures which brought on the secession. Mr. Ebenezer Erskine having testified with an honest freedom against the corruptions of the church, particularly against an act of assembly, 1732, vesting the right of electing ministers, in heritors and elders, that is, in a small part of a congregation instead of the whole, admitting only some of the Lord's people to a privilege which he had bestowed on them all. Mr. Erskine having given so plain a testimony in a sermon before the Synod of Perth and Stirling, was rebuked by that court for speaking disrespectfully of the judicatures of the church. Mr. Erskine protested against this rebuke, as putting a stop to that freedom that the ministers of Christ ought to use in testifying against the sins and corruptions of the times. He appealed to the assembly. The assembly appointed a commission of their number to take cognizance of the affair. In short, Mr. Erskine, with two other ministers who joined with him, were suspended by the commission from the exercise of their office.

Conscious of being engaged in a good cause, these ministers could by no means submit to this unjust censure. The consequence was, that they were in fact cast out of the church, and were obliged to form themselves into a Presbytery, for the exercise of those powers

of teaching, of discipline, and government, which our Lord Christ had committed to them. Thus the secession was a matter of necessity; it was brought about rather by a providential train of events, than in consequence of any formed design of those who were the instruments of it. The Associate Presbytery, (for that was the name they assumed) published, in 1738, their Act and Testimony, in which they reckon up many of the grounds of the Lord's controversy with the church and the nation.

The ground of the secession was not merely that the judicatures of the church persisted in their positive corruptions, but also that they obstinately refused to pay any attention to those pieces of reformation which had been formerly attained, particularly in that remarkable period of the history of the Church of Scotland, between 1638 and 1650. The example of our forefathers, at that time subordinate to the Scriptures of truth, was the model which the Associate Presbytery had constantly in view. On this plan they drew up a confession of sins, public and personal, acknowledged the obligation of the solemn covenant that had been entered into by our fathers, and framed a bond suited to their own situation, in which they take the Lord for their God, they take Christ for their Saviour, his righteousness for the only ground of their hope, his word for their only rule, and his Spirit for their guide, and bind themselves by oath to serve him from a principle of gratitude and thankfulness, and particularly to cleave to the testimony they had engaged in against the errors and corruptions of the times.

The ministers first entered into this bond, and then they proposed to admit the people of their respective congregations to join in it. This resolution led the ministers to inquire whether the people were involved in any oaths inconsistent with the bond. In consequence of this inquiry one of the ministers moved, at a meeting, in 1744, that the religious clause of some Burgess oaths should be taken into consideration. About this time their number being considerably increased, they divided themselves into three Presbyteries, subordinate to their general meeting, which took the name of the Associate Synod. In 1746 there was a great deal of reasoning in the Synod, on the religious clause of some Burgess oaths. The clause is in these words, "I profess and allow with my heart the true religion presently professed within this realm, and authorized by the laws thereof." The Synod passed an act,

declaring that this oath was inconsistent with the bond they had entered into, and with their present state of secession from the church established by law. The ministers who were afterward called Burghers, from their defence of the Burgess oath, entered their protest against this decision of the Synod. Their opposition increased, till it brought on a separation between the parties, so that there are now two different bodies of Seceders ; each of them has its Presbyteries, and each an Associate Synod ; both pretend to adhere to the same testimony.

With regard to principles, the Antiburghers adhere to the whole of the act and testimony published by the Associate Presbytery ; the Burghers charge it with errors and mistakes ; the Antiburghers testify against the manner of settling religion in Scotland at the Revolution ; the Burghers defend it ; the Antiburghers maintain the reasonableness of covenanting at present ; the Burghers deny it. In fine, the cause of all these differences is, that the Antiburghers hold the Burgess oath to be sinful, while the Burghers regard it as quite lawful.

With regard to practice, the Antiburghers are pursuing the path which the Associate Presbytery had marked out ; but the Burghers have been going farther astray from it ever since they left their brethren ; they seldom take any notice of the act and testimony, and they never enter into the bond.

Thus much for what I thought necessary to give you some notion of the secession, and the difference between the Burghers and Antiburghers, which, in fact, is very great. I have been long, but could not make it shorter. 'Tis true I am an Antiburgher, but am not conscious of writing one word dictated by partiality. Though the account is badly executed, it is well meant, and may be firmly depended upon for truth. After all, I am afraid you will enter into the spirit of this controversy. The difference between the established church and the Seceders, and that again between them, is very great, and though volumes were written, it could not be taken up, unless a person were living in the country.

I beg leave to write you one letter more on what may be called the interior police of the Seceders. You will understand it at first view. After that I shall contract my bounds.

Mr. J——n had been a little acquainted with Mr. Townsend. He had been fond of him, and thought him remarkably religious ;

he has since heard some things unfavourable and hurtful to his character; he would wish to know how he is doing, and if his character is good.

I know not if your books are entered or not. If it would be no hurt to the printers in England, I would cause them to be printed here. What we cannot have in London under 5s. is easily got here at 2s. If in the smallest degree against the London booksellers, I would be quite against it. I have only the interest of religion at heart. I would beg you to satisfy me in this particular.

This letter is so silly and mean, that I am almost ashamed to send it to you. It puts me in mind of the prayers and other religious services I am daily trying to offer up to the Lord. What sad pieces of blundering work are they! What with hypocrisy, heart-wandering, vain and sinful thoughts, Atheism, unbelief, stupidity, carelessness; what with legal confidence at some times, and slavish fear at other times, they are all covered over with blots. I send you this letter with all its defects and blunders, persuaded that candour and friendship will cover them all. Why should I not do the same with my poor tattered performances in religion? Why should I not put them in Christ's hand, believing that his friendship will cover them, will recommend them, and make them come up with acceptance before God? Christ is the best friend of poor sinners. Good news it is for us, that his friendship and his advocacy do not proceed upon any thing in us or done by us; but only upon his own righteousness. He is our advocate, because he is our propitiation. May the Lord interest us in both.

I beg you would write me as soon as possible. Write little or much as is convenient. I would wish you to write a great deal; but never neglect to write me, because you have not leisure to write much.



MR. WM. BARLASS TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

I AM quite ashamed that I am so long in acknowledging your very valuable letter, which came duly to hand. It was really not in my power. I got it only a day or two before I went from home on business to Perthshire, from which I but lately returned.

I now return you my most sincere and hearty thanks. I acknowledge I rather wearied for your last. Not that at any time I would mean to hurry you, or ask an account of your silence. Far from that—I shall always be exceeding glad to hear from you when your writing will not be in the least inconvenient. Your apology, for which there was no need, was too satisfactory. We need trials; and, thanks to Christ, we get them. Happy they who are ready to encounter the last enemy, and having done all to stand. All must die; most die fools; but there are a few who die wise indeed. Blessed death, to die in Him who is life itself! How glad was I to hear that your father-in-law lived and died in the Lord! Dear in God's sight was that saint's death, and well might he say, Thy servant, Lord, I am, and will be to eternity. I have some faint thoughts what Mrs. Newton would feel upon the death of her dear father; and I really feel much for her. It may seem enthusiastic; but it is true, that I am as much concerned in Mrs. Newton's welfare as that of my nearest relations. Though it might be your loss, it was his exceeding gain; the day of his death being better than the day of even his second birth. You tell me he was in extreme pain; but the very moment that death executed the commission pain for ever ceased; and pining sickness never touches more. He would be delightfully surprised to find himself out of the arms of his mourning daughter in the embraces of a set of kind and beneficent spirits, appointed to convoy him to the heavenly mansions! Luke tells us, that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom; and this honour have all the saints. What unknown pleasures would he taste in conversing with the natives of the better country! What information would they give him of the manners, the privileges, the glories, and especially of the King of the country he was going to! You justly observe that his death is not properly a subject for mourning. We are indeed apt to mourn at the death of even our religious friends, though undoubtedly we ought to rejoice that they have made such a happy change. They are safe in the harbour, while we are tossing on a rough and stormy sea; they are in the land of long and everlasting joy, while we are wandering in the weary vale of tears; they are perfectly holy and happy, while we are in perpetual danger from corruption within and from numberless snares and temptations without. It is Christ's will they should be in heaven, and why should we be against it? He wants them

with him to behold his glory ; intensely to search into the vast extent of it, to admire and praise, to rejoice and glory in it.

We need not then sorrow as those who have no hope, but let us follow them who, through faith and patience, are possessing the promise. If we have grace in the bud, it will at length be blown into the full blossom of glory, and we shall soon join the large assembly of saints above, who have it for their unwearied employ to contemplate the fair Immanuel.

After all, to me, at least, death is an awful subject. Often, very often, do I shudder at the thoughts of launching into the world of spirits.

My worthy Sir, let me frequently have a share in your prayers ; and when praying for me it will always be a suitable petition (it is a very comprehensive one) that the Lord would make me willing and ready to die. I must stop, and not weary you.

I am quite happy, if the hints I sent you about the Secession were in the least satisfactory. Your letter was so long in coming, that I was afraid you might consider that what I wrote was somewhat reflecting on Episcopacy, and so heartily despise writing. I was conscious that nothing of that kind was meant, and that simply a few facts were noticed. Pardon the ungenerous surmise, which arose merely from a fear of offending you. I might have known your spirit better. I can, with the utmost safety assure you, " that I like you every way as well as though you were an Antiburgher, like myself." I am very much obliged to you for the sketch of your sentiments, and earnestly beg your Commentary (as you call it) on every thing I write you, and as much new text as possible. Could you possibly think that any thing you write would offend me ? Perhaps I would be the last person living whom you could offend, especially when writing to myself. Much more need have I to " entreat you to bear with my weakness, and pass by it, if I have written any thing which should displease you."

Sir, rather pity me, that I promised another sheet upon the Seceders. I may weary you ; and it is not so easy as might be thought to write about real religion in this country. It is easy telling you what profession there is, but it is not so easy to discern the practice and reality. A stranger would be apt to suspect me of prejudice, were I to express my sentiments about real religion in the established church. There are many good men in it, at which I

greatly rejoice : yet I cannot help saying, that the number of faithful, diligent, evangelical ministers, and of holy, tender, humble Christians, comparatively is but small, very small.

There are near one hundred ministers in the Antiburgher Synod. I cannot tell the precise number of Burgher ministers, but they are considerably fewer. Our congregations, upon an average, may be reckoned at four or five hundred examinable persons. They generally consist of the lower or middling sort of people. Our clergymen are, for the most part, maintained as decently as those of the established church. Each Synod has one appointed to teach divinity ; so that our students attend the universities only for the languages and philosophy. We attend our professor the same number of years as they do at the universities, and are enjoined the same exercises, only we allot the Saturdays for prayer and conference—a thing known at no university. Those days we never think lost. Our present professor is a man of a most amiable character. He has a vast deal of solid sense, and speaks of things the most difficult in divinity with the same ease and simplicity as if it were of some common story. He has a most amazing acquaintance with the Bible, and is very religious. There is the greatest difference imaginable between his lectures and those delivered at Glasgow or Edinburgh. I know them all.

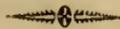
In the establishment any person may prosecute studies who pleases. He is taken no notice of by the clergy till he offers himself to some Presbytery for license. With us the case is otherwise. If a young man means to attend the college, he must acquaint the Presbytery under whose inspection he is ; the Presbytery then examines his knowledge, as to learning and religion, and encourages or not accordingly. And, after a regular course at the university, when about to study, he has to undergo a second examination before a committee of Synod. The most learned are generally members of this committee ; for we have learned men. At this examination they are peculiarly strict as to real religion, and particularly as to the motives inducing them to study divinity. They are examined in the same manner a third time before license, and a fourth before ordination. Well do I mind the time when I looked upon this strictness as nothing but whim, bigotry, and Pharisaic precision, &c. ; but I have altered my mind. I now see the beauty and vast utility of it, and am convinced that all, in a human way,

depends upon our licentiates, and therefore the Synod cannot be too strict. These may seem small things, but perhaps it is in a great measure owing to them that—

One thing among us is very comfortable ; for, from the one side of the kingdom to the other, our ministers preach all as with one voice. As to doctrine, they are entirely the same. Religious people in the establishment have to pass this and that parish, and to go some three or four, before they can be sure of food for their souls. Among the Seceders there is no need for this. One minister may be weaker than another, both in grace and gifts, but even the weakest aims at being evangelical, and the most are truly so.

As to their manners, (language and delivery I mean,) some have more of the unaffected simplicity of the old Scotch Presbyterian, while others affect more of the fashionable and polite air, though it does not always succeed with them. I have often observed these less attentive to the matter of their sermon ; and their manner leads the more ignorant to admire the man rather than the sentiment. Hence, sometimes the silliest preachers are the most popular at first, though in a course of years a man is generally esteemed according to his real merit. The amiable and godly Mr. Hervey has, to be sure very innocently, hurt a great many preachers here. They will attempt (and a needless, hard task it is) to imitate his poetic prose, and they only get some high-sounding vocables ill enough joined.

Reading sermons is very frequent in the establishment, but never has appeared in the Secession. In the Kirk indeed it prevails most among the fashionable, careless Arminians. It is a practice universally hated by all serious people here.



MR. WM. BARLASS TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Rev. and dear Sir,

I WISH I could tell you, weeping, about the low state of religion in the Secession. There is great ground of lamentation. We have been highly favoured. We have the Gospel in great plenty and purity. But we have brought forth wild grapes. There has been a long time of outward peace and quiet, and we are in general fallen into much insensibility. Deadness, wordly-mindedness, unthank-

fulness, and want of Christian love are diseases, alas ! too prevalent among us. Love to God is not properly evidenced by delighting in his word and ordinances. Yet the Lord has not forgotten to be gracious. Christians at times have reason to say, that as they have heard, so their eyes have seen it, and their hearts felt it in the city of our God. There is no congregation among us, wherever I was acquainted, or as far as I can learn it from others, in which there are not some who give evidence of being born from above. The good Shepherd is daily bringing some into his sheepfold, and feeding those whom he has already brought in, though not in such numbers or in so remarkable a manner as he sometimes does. And who are we, that we should despise the day of small things ? In every congregation there are a good number of praying societies. In some places our ministers will not baptize a man's child, unless he brings a line-testimonial from the society whereof he is a member. This obliges them to commence members, and attend. This, however, is not the case in all congregations. A society seldom consists of more than six, and seldom more than twelve, members. They meet once a week, and continue generally near three hours. Two or three questions on practical religion are discussed, and two or three members pray. This duty is sometimes peculiarly owned of God ; members talk ; Christ draws near, and opens up the Scriptures ; their hearts begin to burn ; and, when warm, they pour them out to Christ.

The communion is celebrated in some of our congregations twice, and in some but once, a year. This, perhaps, is seldom enough ; but the loss is quite made up another way. Our people have frequent opportunities of joining in the neighbouring congregations ; so that a person in health, if he has a desire, has, at least, an opportunity of joining six times a year. Persons, indeed, in the highlands are an exception. In every congregation a fast is observed the week before dispensing the sacrament. Always two, and sometimes three, sermons are preached the preparation Saturday, and two on Monday. This has long been the custom in Scotland. No sensible person among us will insist that these are indispensably necessary ; but as few real Christians but will allow that they are highly beneficial, we have great crowds attending on these occasions ; and though, " what went ye out for to see," would be a hard question to many of us, yet a number will always come hungering

and thirsting for the food of their souls, and they are not sent empty away. Their sweet experience tells them, that the Lord is not a barren wilderness or a land of drought. The wicked world may laugh at it; yet I think it ought to be acknowledged to the praise of our kind Redeemer, that much good has been done on such occasions in this country. Each of our ministers has the assistance of his brethren at the sacrament. There are always five or six of his nearest neighbours with him. The variety of gifts, when a number of ministers are met, I think is often a blessing. When any person wants to communicate, who has never done it before, he has to converse privately with his minister, who examines him as to his knowledge, faith, &c.; and if satisfied with him he reports the same to his session, to see if they are also satisfied, &c. All who communicate receive tickets (or tokens, as they call them here) from the session constituted. This prevents confusion. With us no persons immoral or scandalous are admitted. Every session endeavours, through Christ's direction, to separate between the precious and vile! and takes all possible care not to give that which is holy to dogs! But, alas! in the establishment they fail egregiously here. Among us baptism is never dispensed privately, but always in public, after teaching. No person can have his children baptized, but who, in the judgment of charity, we can admit to partake of the Lord's Supper. They are seals of the same covenant. All offences are considered in proportion to their nature. The session takes cognizance of a cause, and if necessary, then the Presbytery, from which, at times, there lies an appeal to the Synod, which meets twice a year.

There are two things, which I dare say may prejudice even the religious and sensible part of the people in the Church of England against our Scotch Presbyterians, their uniformly asserting the Divine right of Presbytery; and the aversion they have on all occasions shown to Episcopacy. As to the first, I assure you we do not (at least none of the sensible and judicious will) assert the whole form of Presbyterian government, as we exercise it, is of Divine institution. We only hold that the leading lines of it are warranted by Scripture, such as the plurality of Christian ministers, the power of the church to convene in assemblies to oversee and regulate matters, and to preserve unity and harmony under their care. This I should think would greatly soften our principles on

that head to the candid. As to the aversion to Episcopacy, common among religious people here, especially Seceders, I cannot say but they often carry it too, too far. But let it be considered what sort of an Episcopacy the Scots got a taste of in the last century. How much blood was shed. What dreadful tyranny was used to introduce and establish it! What profligate lives did both the bishops and lower clergy lead, and how bloody were they! With pleasure I except from the last my favourite Leighton. What a valuable, religious, sweet, and simple writer is he. I am quite enamoured with his works. By the by Bishop Leighton never could enter into the views of his brethren. He bore with them, prayed for them, tried to reclaim them, but at length was obliged to leave them. He entirely left them, I think, twelve years before his death. Indeed the West of Scotland is stored with marks of prelatric vengeance. I know many good and worthy men in your church abhor these cruelties as much as we can do, but it is hard to bring the common people here to think so. Another thing which helps to keep up the aversion, is the account of our trading people, when they return from England. They bring down but sorry enough accounts of the lower order of your clergy. Now, to hear of a drunken clergyman, or one accustomed to swearing, appears (as it really is) a terrible thing to our people. Though many of our corrupt clergy here are very far from adorning the Gospel by their walk and practice, yet, except in rare instances, they preserve outward decency. They indeed act not like Christians, but, as we say, they act like gentlemen. The Episcopalists who are still among us, are far from endearing the scheme or party to us. We have some meetings of them in our trading towns. They are here divided into Jurants and Non-Jurants. The Jurants qualify to the government, and are on the same footing with Episcopalists in England. The Non-Jurants, so called, because they will not qualify, are avowed friends to the old wicked cause of the Pretender. They are rank Arminians, if not Socinians. They have little learning, and less holiness. I am very well acquainted with nine or ten Non-Jurant clergy, and never could leave their company without praying, From such ministers, may the good Lord always deliver Scotland. Providence seems to be working ruin to their scheme very fast.

But I must stop ; I am running on without knowing whether you will think one word worth your reading.

You know not if any town of its bulk be equally favoured as Olney. In one respect I am entirely of that mind, for you are there. Paisley is very highly favoured of the Lord. There are two legally established ministers in it. Both on the Gospel plan. Each of them preaches three times on the Sabbath, and one of them every Thursday evening. The Burgher minister preaches three times every Sabbath. The Antiburghers as often, and always on Thursday evening. They visit from house to house, and examine their people publicly every year.

If you wanted particular information about any thing, you might mention it, and as far as lay in my power I would endeavour to satisfy you. However, I heartily agree with you, when you say that we can employ our time and paper to better advantage than by disputing about these points of government, &c. Yes, let us begin, and try to write about Christ, and our subject will never be exhausted. He is the best subject for letters of friendship. You can never do me a greater kindness than commend Christ to me, and me to Christ.

I think I would give all the world for such a measure of faith as you have attained ; but why say that, since I ask it so little of Christ, whose gift it is. Alas ! I have a sad, deceitful heart ; it is peculiarly deceitful. I often own my wickedness and worthlessness, but am not sure that there is not a great deal of pride in my seemingly humble acknowledgment of unworthiness. But I still wish to pour out my heart to you, just as if I had known you all my life. Pardon my freedom, my worthy Sir. I like you very much, and very much like to confide in you. I am constantly doubting whether I have an interest in Christ. Unbelief is strong, and I dare say aided by Satan. Complain of these enemies to your, and, I humbly hope, to my God and Father.

THE REV. JOHN NEWTON TO MR. WM. BARLASS.

My dear Friend,

I hoped to have answered your favour of the 5th November sooner, but even now I break through almost indispensable engagements. Were I only to consult my inclinations, I could almost weary you with letters. Whenever I delay, I wish you to impute it to any cause rather than negligence.

Your farther account of the state and aims of the Secession is very acceptable to me. Be assured my heart is with you and your brethren, and more especially with those, who, like you, can look over the pales of an enclosure, and rejoice in the Lord's work where he is pleased to carry it on, under some difference of forms. For myself, though I am sure I am where his own hand of providence placed it, and had reasons which I trust he approves, for exercising my ministry in our establishment, yet I do not consider myself as appropriated to any party; and had the openings of his providence so guided me, I believe I could, with equal cheerfulness, have served him either in the Church of Scotland, or among the Seceders, and been very well content, without either hierarchy or surplice. My chief difficulty would have been to join with any, who are for confining the church of Christ within their own limits. From the imperfect accounts I had of the Seceders, before I was pleased with your correspondence, I was led to think they were blameable in this respect; but I have now abundant reason to be satisfied, that some of them, at least, are far otherwise minded. I suppose it may be on your side the Tweed as it is on ours. We have bigots (good men I hope in the main) of all denominations, and a few of a more enlarged spirit, who, while they follow their light, and wish to approve themselves to their own Master, are willing to receive others, as He receives themselves, without doubtful disputations, and consider the exercise of mutual love and forbearance, as among the brightest evidences, and fairest fruits of grace.

I do not wonder that Prelacy appears in a very unfavourable light in Scotland, as the principal characters who laboured to settle it there, and the general strain of their conduct, would have disparaged the cause of the truth itself. And even at present, the general appearance of the established Church in England, can have

nothing in it very inviting to spiritual persons, who have not acquired some previous good will to it by education. But I believe this is not owing to its outward form, but to the want of the Gospel, and to the absence of the Holy Spirit, whose influences are only found concurring with the declaration of his own truth. I believe if all our bishops were such men as Leighton or Bedel, and all our parochial ministers experimental preachers of the grace of God, the constitution of the church would be found noway to interfere with the general edification of the people; and without the influence of the good Spirit, and ministers filled with faith and grace, it signifies little whether the outward administrations of church matters be in the hands of bishops, or synods, or general assemblies. The Jewish church service was formed upon a confessedly Divine institution; the place, the temple, the seasons, the sacrifices, the priesthood, were all, by express direction from the Lord. But when they lost sight of spirituality, and rested in outward services, in vain they said, The temple of the Lord are we, when the Lord of the temple had forsaken them, and declared himself displeased with his own appointments.

At Olney, (and it is much the same in all the parishes where the Lord has placed awakened ministers) we are *Ecclesia intra Ecclesiam*. I preach to many, but those whose heart the Lord touches are the people of my peculiar charge; and though I have no authoritative jurisdiction over them, yet the Lord gives me that weight by the word of the ministry, that they are, in general, as much unwilling to grieve me, as if I was armed with the plenitude of ecclesiastical power. Indeed I desire no power as a minister, but what I derive from the power of the word upon their consciences. I do not seem to rule them, but when my desire is known it is seldom crossed, and I believe many of them could not sleep in their beds if they thought they had displeased me. And though I have not a positive right by my office as a clergyman, to exclude any from the Lord's table, yet he has been pleased so to enforce what I have said from the pulpit, that few come thither without my approbation. Perhaps there are not many assemblies in the kingdom where there are fewer come to that ordinance, whom the minister would wish absent, than at Olney. So that without any explicit discipline, the end which discipline should aim at is, in a tolerable degree, answered. On the other hand, my superiors in the church,

leave me at full liberty to preach and manage, within my own parish, as I please. The bishop usually comes into the neighbourhood once in three years, the archdeacon annually. At those times I wait on them, answer to my name, dine with them, and then return home. And this is all the weight of church power that I feel. Except for about four days in three years, I know no more of a superior, than if I was an archbishop myself.

The above was written about a fortnight since, I hope I shall now be able to finish the sheet. I am much obliged to you for your very kind sentiments respecting me and mine. Mrs. Newton would be glad to have opportunity of thanking you here for her part. It would give me great pleasure to see you, but if we do not meet in this life, a time, or rather an eternity, is coming, when all the chosen race shall meet around the throne. We shall then be perfectly intimate, and perfectly of a mind. Not a cloud to weaken our light, not one infirmity or mistake to cause the smallest jar in all the numerous assembly. Then there will be no call or room for the exercise of mutual forbearance. All will be harmony, joy, and love. The song of the redeemed on high, loud as from numbers without number, sweet as from blest voices, will be ever new, ever singing, and not one jarring discordant note shall be heard. In the present life we have need of patience, but there we shall have nothing to try us. Our Lord could free his people, if it were his will, from sin and sorrow upon earth, as perfectly as in heaven. But our troubles and difficulties are occasions which he appoints, for the proof, growth, and manifestation of his grace in us, and likewise of making his love, care, tenderness, and power, more manifest to ourselves. In like manner, he could remove every prejudice, and give equal degrees of light to all his people, so that there should be no difference among them either about doctrine or discipline. But were this the case, their uniformity would not afford them such opportunities of approving their obedience to him, and their love to each other, as they may draw from their lesser differences. But alas! remaining corruptions, and the subtlety of Satan, operate so strongly, that the sheep of Christ think they do him service, by worrying and tearing one another. Alas, when self fights in holy armour, and the cause of our own unsanctified passions is honoured with the specious name of the cause of God and truth, then religious zeal is seen in all the senses the original

bears but the good sense, and breathes forth indignation, envy, and wrath. Then Satan is transformed into an angel of light, and men suppose themselves to be men abounding in duty, in proportion as they depart from that spirit of love, which is the chief criterion and characteristic of the religion of Jesus. I remember a passage somewhere in ancient history, of a battle fought in the night; both parties were resolute, many were the slain and wounded on both sides, both congratulated themselves on the mischief they had done to their opponents—at length the day broke, and turned their joy into sorrow. They then found to their confusion that their animosity had been wholly owing to fighting in the dark before they had made proper inquiry, for though they had mistaken each other for enemies, they were friends and allies, engaged in the same cause, and had been weakening each other for the advantage of the common enemy. Alas, when we have done with this state of darkness, and come to acknowledge each other in the light of glory, were shame, regret, and remorse, compatible with that state, many of the Lord's people would have room enough for grief, upon a review of their conduct while here, to reflect how they once treated many of their brethren, who were equally dear to Him as themselves!

Blessed be his name, he thinks better of us than we do of one another. He knows our frame, pities our weakness, and multiplies to us the pardons which we daily need, and will not hear or receive our mutual accusations. But they are happiest who are favoured with most of that mild, merciful spirit, which shone in all his conduct when he was conversant upon earth.

Death, as you observe, is a solemn subject, and the dying hour will be a solemn hour. In our common trials, we derive some support and encouragement from our past experience. But no part of our past experience can help us to form a right conception of what it is to die! It will be a perfectly new circumstance, quite different from all we have known before. In vain we employ our imagination upon this point; we can perhaps in some measure realize to our thoughts the moment before death, but how we shall feel, and to what we shall be introduced, the moment afterward, is inconceivable. There thought fails, the mind shudders, and starts back, as from the brink of a precipice. That wonderful union between soul and body must be dissolved, but at present the soul is

at a loss, how it will manage when deprived of those organs, which have hitherto been the inlet of all its perceptions. But faith gets over these difficulties. Though none of our departed friends return to tell us how it is, Jesus, our best friend, has died before us, and for us. He has taken away the sting that nature fears. The death of his saints is precious in his sight; the time, the place, the manner, every circumstance belonging to it, is already appointed by infinite wisdom and love; and he has promised to be with us. When we approach very near Jordan, we shall see the ark of the covenant in the waters to keep them low till we are passed over. Abraham went forth, not knowing whither he went, it was enough that he knew whom he followed. This will be our case, dying will be the last, the highest, the crowning act of faith. And though our curiosity is not gratified as to particulars, yet we know, in general, that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. We shall then instantly see him as he is, and we shall then be like him and with him for ever. Isa. lx. 18—20. Is not this a consummation devoutly to be wished? The Lord help us to die daily, and to live every day as though it were to be our last: to live while we do live, and fill up the hours as they pass in his service, doing all we do for his sake. The rest we may cheerfully leave to him, who will be sure to do all things well.

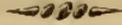
I wish you in your next to help us to form an idea of your person and situation. Is it an impertinent curiosity, or the effect of regard, that we want to know whether you are tall or short, fat or lean, married or single, of what age, and how long you have been walking Zionward? In these points, and twenty other *et cæteras*, you may gratify us if you please, when you have leisure. I am sorry to return you but one sheet for two; but if I waited for leisure to fill another, you would think me too long in acknowledging your kindness. I have some thoughts of tacking a few hints together for the press, to persuade Christians (if possible) to love one another, for the truth and the Lord's sake, to suspend their hostilities about forms, and to unite, heart and hand, against their common foe. If the Lord enables me to accomplish my purpose, I will endeavour to give you notice. In the mean time, I beg you to pray for me: I am a poor creature, very far from deserving the favourable opinion you entertain of me, but I hope I am daily

crying for mercy, and that, though I am poor and needy, the Lord thinketh of me. We join in love. Remember me to your friends, and believe me to be,

Your very affectionate and obliged,

JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, 13th Jan. 1773.



MR. WM. BARLASS TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Begun February 25, 1773.

Rev. and dear Sir,

YOUR last came regularly to hand in course of post. I am obliged to you for your letters, but it is cold to say only I am obliged; it is vastly below the truth; I have a thousand obligations to you. When I wrote you at first, I considered you as a very great man, for whom I had a very great regard; but I was afraid, and studied to write well, and I dare say studied myself out of any little sense I have. If I be afraid, and think, the vein of natural thought is cut, and I am done. I shall still consider you as a very great man; but, at the same time, my real friend, partial to myself and what I write, bearing with myself, and excusing all my faults. As much as possible I will lay aside every consideration which would be a check on my freedom in writing; and without aiming at elegance, a thing I am noway master of, shall write every thing I wish to communicate just as it occurs, and whenever I err shall rejoice to be corrected by you. And if any thing drops from my pen, which in the least degree may offend you, be assured it is quite contrary to my inclination.

In my last I had not room to thank you for your catalogue of books. It was rather wrong in me to trouble you in this matter, but I was anxious to know your favourite authors, and, if possible, get myself formed on the same plan. Some of the writers whom you mention I have never seen; but I admire the most of them.

Witsius and Owen have been my principal authors since I had any sense at all. I have read the most of both their works, though not all. I am peculiarly fond of those pieces of Owen's which were written near his death. As they say of some bird, I think his song was sweetest when nearest the last. I would not be thought by this to speak against any of his works. Far from that; they are all sensible and sound; but in his first publications he rather makes too great a show of learning, and borders on what we call pedantry. But the period in which he lived excuses him in part. I have often thought it pity that there were not more of Witsius's works translated into English for the sake of unlettered people; only there are few that could do him justice. It would be very difficult to retain his spirit in a translation, which is not done in our English copy of his *Economy*; and though this is best known in this country, I cannot help thinking but some of his other works are equal if not superior to it. A little learning is a dangerous thing, and a person who has just got a smattering of it is apt to think that if a book be in every body's hands it can scarce be worth his while to meddle with it; to this cause I ascribe my not reading R. and E. Erskine's Works when I had opportunity, and since my sentiments were a little rectified I never could get time. In this country these men's writings have been very useful among common people. I cannot account for it, but I have rather an aversion at religious memoirs in general, though Halyburton's are an exception; they are the most judicious and scriptural of any I ever saw, and in their department merit an equal place with his *Insufficiency of Natural Religion*, and the *Essay on Faith*, annexed. I would like to know your sentiments about this book. I am not well acquainted with the French language, and as ill with their writers. Hence I know nothing of Quesnelle and Nicolle. I have seen some excellent quotations from a *Treatise against that nursery of wickedness, the Stage*, by Nicolle; this, and chiefly your recommendation, have excited my curiosity to see him. It would be no compliment either to Jonathan Edwards or you, to tell you that I agree with you in giving him the laurel for divinity in this century; though some of his books are so laboured that my poor narrow head, when stretched to the utmost, can hardly follow him. He has undeniably proved original sin, and for ever cut the sinews of Arminianism. I have read Witherspoon and M'Laurin, and admire Leighton. Till your recommendation of Gurnal I had

never read a page of him. I have since read the whole, and am perfectly in raptures with him. At the best it is but a needless supposition, and I hope will always remain so, but were I confined to one book besides my Bible, I dare say Gurnal's Christian Armour would be my choice. I never saw such a variety of subjects so religiously handled in so little room. I have no fault with him but one, and that perhaps wholly owing to myself. He seems to me, at times, to be rather too well acquainted with his enemy, and to find him where scarce any but himself could have discovered him; and to blame him rather too much. To be plain, my worthy Sir, for some time past I have turned my attention a good deal to Satan's temptations; I cannot say I know any thing about them; and Mr. Gurnal would seem to unsaint every one who is unexperienced in this point. It has been matter of serious thought to me, when hearing serious exercised Christians talking as familiarly of Satan's plan of conduct with them, as I can do about the conduct of my bosom friend; and when reading Gurnal, what way they came to such a fixed knowledge about his temptations, and what way I was quite ignorant of them. But after all, I cannot say that ever I was fool enough absolutely to wish or pray, that he might have liberty or power to cultivate an acquaintance with me, either as an angel of light or darkness; for I believe his light is equally ill meant, as his hour and power of darkness, and equally dangerous. I would beg you with the greatest earnestness to tell me in your next if you think that every believer, at all times, is more or less tempted by Satan, and what way a person may know him and resist him. Do you think that at times he may tempt a person to believe that he is not meddling with him; and that if he sin, it lies wholly at his own door? When he finds one thinking that it is almost impossible for a finite spirit to operate on other spirits in close union with bodies, do you think he greatly tempts them to think it impossible, in order behind the screen to carry on his designs to advantage, and with greater success? Do you think that in general his temptations are suited to a man's taste and turn of mind? I hope to receive more satisfaction from a few sentences of yours about these things than from a multitude of volumes. Your letters never fail to satisfy and refresh me.

My writing about the authors you mentioned proceeds entirely from gratitude, and a desire to tell you my mind, to please myself,

and not to edify you. I am covetous in my correspondence with you, and am sure I will receive all the advantage. I am fond to excess of Trail's three volumes, and Bishop Hall's writings, his controversial excepted. I have not read many of the Scotch writers, and can say little about them; but I dare say Boston's Works have been of greater use among common people here than all other books together. Some of his pieces have gone through eighteen or twenty editions. Mr. Hervey's Works had a great run here, and they are daily throwing off new editions of them. I am very fond of his Letters; they breathe a spirit of religion and meekness, which I would wish every Christian possessed of. Excuse my curiosity in wishing to know how Weston-Favel is now situated for the Gospel. Is Mr. Hervey's successor of the same principles with himself, and is religion flourishing in that corner?

If you meet with any new publication that pleases you, I beg from time to time you would recommend it. A few hints relative to the plan of studying will be acceptable; I would wish to be entirely under your direction, for in this view I am entirely a novice.

I shall rejoice to hear that your thoughts on love among Christians are published; and till then it shall be my daily prayer that the Lord the Spirit may direct your heart and pen, and at length crown your labours with abundant success. Were we to view the outward appearance of things, we could have but small, if any hopes, of succeeding; but he who commands to prophesy to dry bones can, with the greatest ease, make them live and love. This should encourage us where visible appearances are against us. A quotation from Trail's 3d vol. page 208. Religion at present, to be sure, is very low; but it has been lower. Christ has but to speak the word, and all the enemies of the church will fly before him as scattered dust before the roaring wind, and the church herself will grow and flourish like a spreading bay. Many deliverances Christ has wrought, and many he will work. His war shall be ended with glory; and his success, though slow, is always sure. Let us be hearty in the cause as well as Christ, and give full evidence that if his enemies live it is entirely contrary to our inclination.

It is no hard matter to persuade men to be indifferent about all religious controversies, and some have been too successful this way; but it is very difficult to bring people from Gospel principles to love all men, and especially the household of faith. Under

pretence of recommending charity, some would have us equally regard Arians, Socinians, Arminians, and Calvinists, provided they have a sort of sober walk ; but we have not so learned Christ. As soon may we expect the stream to run when the fountain is dried up, or the building to abide firm when the foundation is torn away, as Gospel holiness to flourish without Gospel truth. Paul, who so earnestly exhorted the Corinthians and others to love and harmony among themselves, and entreated them not to raise up a spirit of contention about matters of lesser moment, was exceeding warm in the cause of truth, when he saw some, such as the Galatians, departing from the foundation. It would be happy for Christians if they had more of that discerning spirit by which he was guided ; they would then know how to proportion their zeal ; when to apply severe, and when more lenient medicines. Yes, my worthy Sir, proceed, and may the Lord bless you in your attempt to bring Christians to love and unity. The church and the world would both be gainers. Such a beautiful harmony would engage the attention of others ; they would be induced to believe that the head and founder of such a loving and well-regulated society must be a very extraordinary person, that his claims to a Divine mission are just, and that he really came from God. The love and unity of all saints would be an evidence of the truth of Christianity, as it shows its Divine power and efficacy, and sanctifying influence. Then the world would believe that Christ was sent of God. Seeing the effects of the religion of Christ upon the sincere professors of it, the men of the world have been often struck with a conviction of Christ being the sent of God, and of the truth of this religion ; nay, some, through this means, have been taught by the Spirit of grace the saving knowledge of Jesus. But after all, the love of saints will never be perfect till the great day, when all the members of Christ's mystical body shall be gathered together in one ; then their unity will be completed, and displayed in the fairest light ; then they will be freed from all their enemies and imperfections, and the world, and themselves, shall know assuredly that the Father loved them as he loved Christ.

Pardon one paragraph more about Seceders. You hint that your only difficulty would have been to join those who are for confining the church of Christ within their own pale. I am not ignorant that this heavy charge has often been brought against Seceders ;

but I assure you they are wronged exceedingly. It has grieved me to see not a few of that denomination too narrow in their views, and ready to speak too harshly against others : but I never met with one who entertained or would avow such an antichristian sentiment. It would be strange indeed if we were to think the church confined to ourselves. This would make Christ's little flock *little* with a witness !! I hope God has a great number of hidden ones in different nations, under a variety of denominations, who when gathered together will make a glorious company. This is a cloudy and dark day, and the flock of Christ are much scattered and hid ; but they are all under the tender loving care of the good Shepherd, and none of them shall be lost. It would be glorifying to God, and happy for themselves, if they were more united ; and for my part I look upon every review of real godliness, among whatever party, as working towards that union, and though it will never be perfect here, yet if there was a great deal more of the power of religion there would be far less noisy contention about the form of it. A believer is still a brother, whatever name he may be distinguished by ; and all the saints are precious in God's sight, whether called Lutheran, Calvinist, Episcopalian, or Presbyterian.

Let every man be persuaded in his own mind, is a noble rule. I know not how it is, I think myself no bigot, and yet I cannot adopt the sentiments of those men, however much I esteem them otherwise, who regard the various forms of church government contended for, as all equally agreeable to the Scripture, or equally conducive to the desired end : neither dare I regard with a total indifference the doctrinal questions which are agitated among them who hold the foundation. And yet believe me, dear Sir, it gives me the same pleasure to hear that souls are gathered to Christ among you as if it were among ourselves. If God be glorified, Christ preached, and souls be saved, I do and will rejoice. I assure you, I wish to regard the interest of no party any farther than it is the interest of Christ. I wish to know the truth as it is in Jesus ; to know it in its purity, without any mixture of falsehood. To know the truth as it is in Paul or Peter, or in the most eminent saint that ever lived, is to know it in the streams only, where it may be mingled with some corruptions, but to know the truth, as it is in Jesus is to know it in the fountain where it is absolutely impossible error can ever come. Engaged in the search of truth, I would never wish to ask

how it is in this or the other great and good man, but how it is in Jesus.

I am glad to hear that you have such an agreeable, obedient, and thriving flock at Olney, and that you have liberty to manage them as you are directed by the word, and are not forced to be submissive to the will of man. It is a great mercy to you and your people that you have so little to do with superiors. How would some of the good old doctrinal Puritans have rejoiced in such an indulgence; when alas, they could not obtain it! I have not the least doubt but you will see this blessing coming from one infinitely superior to your superiors, and daily ascribe to him a tribute of praise, and use your liberty for the glory and interest of the dear Redeemer.

As you observe, books are printed on worse paper in Scotland than in England, so that the money can scarcely be saved. Religious books are always the worst printed here, because they are chiefly bought by the common people. Books of history, trade, agriculture, philosophy, &c. &c. are little worse printed here than in London. Your Narrative is certainly almost out of print. I commissioned a few dozens from London, but they could not be got; neither could I find them in Scotland. I had one copy of my own, which I lent to some friends, from one it passed to another, so that I could scarcely get it back. It wandered almost half a year that way, but at length I have given it to the printer. I think it a pity but there were a letter added to it, informing people of your entry upon the ministry, and a number of other things. It just breaks people's hearts to find you had made application to be put in orders, and had met with a refusal—and they all cry, O! what came of Mr. Newton at length. If you would agree to it, I think another letter would be of the highest advantage. The Narrative I think a most excellent preface to your other works, and therefore have begun with it. If the Lord spare me, I hope all the rest will be published in order. I never will desire you to hurry yourself, but for this, and other reasons, I would beg a letter from you at farthest within six weeks.

THE REV. JOHN NEWTON TO MR. WM. BARLASS.

My dear Sir,

I THINK I have already prepared you not to expect long apologies, even for too long silence. I love you dearly; prize your correspondence, and am sorry I cannot write more frequently. Let this suffice. It gives me real pleasure that I can now sit down to write to you. I should have been glad of the indulgence months ago.

I believe the best method of answering your last favour will be to write notes upon the several paragraphs as they occur in course, though perhaps in this interval you have forgotten the particulars, and may have here and there some difficulty to recollect the references. I could write a long note indeed upon what I first meet with—your very great mistake in considering me as a very great man. If we could have a personal interview, I think you would presently be undeceived. Your mistake, however, has done me good. A whole quire of invective from an enemy could hardly have given me so keen a sense of shame. The Scripture assures us that our hearts by nature (like coin from the same mint) are all alike, and I hear my fellow-Christians complain of evils similar to what I feel, and they have the same right with myself to be believed. Otherwise I seem to have reason to conclude there cannot be one upon earth (who knows the Lord) so inconsistent, so evil as myself. There is indeed a large, (and as I have been ready to think with you) sometimes a needless, display of erudition in some of Owen's works, but it is chiefly when he has the Socinian controversy in view. The Socinians of his day were not such superficial, flimsy writers as their modern disciples, but men versed in all the branches of learning, the minutiaë of criticism, and the subtleties of logic or sophistry. He undertook to ferret them out of all their lurking-places; he was qualified for it, and succeeded. I believe this was the principal reason of his method in his commentary on the Hebrews, and some other of his works. But I cannot charge him with pedantry. And he seems always to have aimed at the edification of plain people, intermixing something savoury and experimental in the midst of his arguments. Allowance likewise must be made for the manner of the times in which he lived. In point of arrangement and neatness, and avoiding superfluities, our age is

certainly improved; but I believe we are rather losers by what is called our good taste, for writers now are mere essayists, and fall in general far short of the depth, accuracy, and fulness of such men as Owen, in searching a subject to the bottom. I thought I had given you my opinion of Halyburton on Natural Religion, &c.; I think it a masterpiece, one of the most able performances I ever met with, but I suppose is most read by those who stand least in need of it. If there be such a thing as an honest, candid, inquiring Deist, I should judge he could hardly avoid receiving conviction from an attentive perusal of that book. But I am afraid there are very few who wish to be undeceived, and therefore few who will read it attentively.

What you say of Gurnal reminds me to put another book in your way, (I think the author was a countryman of yours,) Gilpin on Temptation. I think the perusal of it would throw light upon some of your inquiries. I have only room for a few brief hints. They that go down to the sea in ships, and do their business in great waters, experience hardships, and likewise see wonders, which people who live on shore have no idea of. Many of the Lord's people are comparatively landmen; others are mariners, and are called to conflict a great part of their lives with storms and raging billows. I believe much of the variety of this kind is constitutional. We are at a loss to conceive of the invisible world, and the invisible agents belonging to it, but we live in the midst of them. But it seems to me that people of very delicate nerves, and those who are subject to what we call low spirits, are more accessible to this invisible agency than others. I am rather but a landman myself, and know but just enough of some of Satan's devices to qualify me to lisp about them. And I account it a mercy, the Lord in compassion to my weakness has encouraged me to pray, Lead us not into temptation. Satan's power I apprehend is chiefly upon the imagination—his temptations may be considered under two heads, the terrible and the plausible. By the former he fights against our peace; by the latter he endeavours to ensnare us in our judgment or conduct. The former are the most distressing, the latter not the least dangerous. The former are often the lot of humble, tender-conscienced Christians; in the latter he has most success when we are careless and self-dependent. By the former he shows his rage and power as a roaring lion; by the latter his

subtlety and address as a serpent or angel of light. His attacks in the former way are so vehement, as when he fills the mind with dark and horrible thoughts, blasphemies, and suggestions, at which even fallen nature shudders and recoils, (which is the case with many,) that his interference is plainly to be felt. In the latter his motions are so insinuating, and so connatural to the man of sin within us, that they cannot be easily distinguished from the workings of our own thoughts. I suppose that when Ananias attempted to deceive Peter, he was little aware that Satan had filled his heart, and helped him to the lie. But Satan has a near and intimate connexion with the man of sin—the heart while unrenewed is his work-shop. Ephes. ii. 2. And it is the same with believers, so far as they are unrenewed. Therefore I believe he is never nearer to us, or more busy with us, than at sometimes when we are least apprehensive of him. We have no clear ideas of the agency of spirits, nor is it necessary. The Scripture says little to satisfy our curiosity, but tells us plainly that he is always watching us, and desiring to sift us as wheat. I believe we give him no more than his due, when we charge him with having a hand in all our sin. I believe he cuts us all out abundance of work. But the other kind of temptations in which people are rather passive, though they often think themselves compliant, it is not appointed for all believers to feel, at least not frequently or in a violent degree. A fine general representation of them, we have in that part of the Pilgrim's Progress which describes Christian's passage through the valley of the shadow of death. Bunyan had been an exercised mariner in these deep waters, and he writes like one. As tempted souls go through the most distress, so they usually have the most affecting and striking discoveries of the wisdom, power, and glory of the Lord, and acquire a sympathy for afflicted minds, and a skill in dealing with them, which cannot easily be obtained by reading books. Something of this skill may be acquired from a careful observation of others, but experience is the best school. This lesson is, however, so painful to flesh and blood, that we may be thankful if the Lord permits us to pass it over. I have had some little experience of these things, but my situation in Olney, amongst a poor, afflicted people, who, from a confined and sedentary employment, (lace-making,) are mostly affected with low spirits and nervous disorders, have made me something of a theorist

in the business, and I know not but I could write a volume upon it. But no words can adequately express the dreadful tempests some of God's dear children sustain. They pass through fire and floods, but he is with them, and therefore the floods cannot drown them, nor the flame destroy them. I doubt not but the severest part of Job's trials were of this kind. See likewise Ps. viii. 8.

But I must write shorter notes, or my letter will be long indeed. Trail's three volumes are among the books I highly prize. I am acquainted with Durham, but never read Boston. Indeed most of my reading was before my admission into the ministry. The incumbent calls of my office, and a voluminous correspondence, &c. afford me but little time now. And the Scripture, which is always at hand, and expresses the substance of volumes in a verse or two, renders reading other books less necessary. Though I would always recommend to young men to read a good deal, provided they are so happy as to make a good choice.

I believe there has not been a Gospel sermon preached at Weston-Favel since Mr. Hervey's death; nor can I hear that there is one spiritual person in the parish. His other parish of Collingtree is likewise now a dark place; though there may be half a dozen people there who know something of the Lord. I preached twice a year at Collingtree for about ten years, but I am now quite shut out. Mr. Hervey's usefulness was chiefly in his writings. A few people in the neighbourhood profited by him, who, since his death, have mostly joined the Dissenters, but he never knew that one soul was awakened in the parish where he lived—though he was in every respect one of the greatest preachers of the age. As plain in his pulpit service as he is elegant in his writings. The Lord showed in him, that the work is all his own, and that the best instrument can do no more than he appoints. His own mother and sister lived with him; his temper was heavenly, his conversation always spiritual and instructive; yet he could make no impression upon them living or dying.

I proceeded some way in the book I told you I was writing, but laid it aside in the middle, and have not resumed the design. I found in writing against controversy I insensibly caught the spirit of it; though I was not angry, I was growing minute and dry. If the Lord please, I will begin again *de novo* some time, but I mean to limit myself to about the size of a sixpenny pamphlet. I hardly

expect to see prejudice give way every where, and Christians of all parties all loving each other fervently ; but I hope there are a few individuals of every party who will enter into the views of their Lord, and cheerfully express their love to all who love him in sincerity.

I did not suppose that the Seceders, or any other spiritual people, confined the church of Christ within their own pale, by express or positive declaration ; but, till I was acquainted with you, I thought the Seceders made a point of having as little communication as possible in spirituals, beyond their pale. If you are a proper specimen of the body you belong to, I have reason to be ashamed of thinking so harshly of them. But as I ought not to have judged of the whole, by the very few who have occasionally fallen in my way formerly, so perhaps I should be in the other extreme, if I should now suppose the majority of them are like you. Indeed I believe all denominations, as such, abound with bigotry in favour of their own side, and that the ministers and private Christians in each, are more or less freed from it, in proportion as they are favoured with more of the unction of the Holy Spirit, and as they have more opportunities of observing his work carried on amongst other parties. And perhaps the most catholic-minded Christian upon earth has more bigotry in him than he is aware of. To esteem all modes and forms of worship as equally agreeable to the Scriptures, or conducive to edification, or all difference of sentiment amongst those who hold the head to be of no real importance, is quite a different thing. We have a right to judge and act for ourselves, and to follow the light we have received, and are only blameable when we censure or dislike others, only because they do not exactly see with our eyes, in matters which are not essential. But I need not enlarge upon this point, nor could I express my own sentiments more satisfactorily than by transcribing what you have written upon it.

I am indeed comparatively happy at Olney, in my ministry. Our lot is cast at a distance from the various winds of doctrine, which in many places occasion so much trouble and so many disputes, so that I have only to declare the truth, unmixed with controversy, about it. I could only wish for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, to reveal the truths of the Gospel to many, who, though they are well content to hear them, and would hardly bear

to hear any thing contrary to them, are yet strangers to their power and influence. Alas, a large majority of our congregations are, I fear, sermon-proof—they come to the house of God, and return like a door upon the hinges ; yet through mercy we have little or nothing of the Antinomian spirit amongst us. Very few, whom I do not think believers, are so far blinded as to think themselves so, or have a desire to pass for such. They know they are not ; and if asked the question, will acknowledge, that if they die as they are, they must be lost. But, alas, they do not lay it to heart.

As it is now pretty generally known that the Lord was pleased in his best time to answer my desire, and give me an entrance into the ministry, another letter added to the Narrative could hardly be said to give information upon that point. And the circumstances which led to my admission were too personal and uninteresting to deserve the attention of the public. Therefore though I am sorry to be backward to any thing you propose, I think any addition to the Narrative unnecessary, and that I have written enough already upon the subject of my insignificant self.

I thank you for your friend Mr. Anderson's verses. I am pleased with his mention of me, so far as it gives me hope that he remembers me in his prayers. For the rest, as I hinted to you, a journey to Olney would soon convince him how much he overrates the poor curate there. If you look over the fifth and sixth letters of the Narrative, you will judge how I ought to be affected by the handsome things which you and your friend are pleased to say of me. I trust I have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and that it is the desire and joy of my soul to proclaim the power of that divine *attraction* which could draw so vile a wretch to himself—of the mercy which could pardon such a sinner, and extricate him from such a state of wretchedness and misery. O if my heart were not still vile beyond expression, the commendation of the whole universe could have no other effect than to cover me with blushes and confusion. Ah ! dear Sir, what would you have thought of me had you seen me when I lived at the Plantanes ? The sight of me would have been offensive to your eyes, and my speech would have struck you with horror. Miserable and despicable in every view—pinched with want, and the common mark of scorn and insult, my whole wretched amusement and pleasure, seemed to lie in blaspheming the name and person of Jesus, and in feeding my imagination with schemes of wicked-

ness which I had not opportunity to perpetrate. And now it seems I am to be compared with my namesake Sir Isaac. The Lord has since given me a name and a place among his children, favoured me with the friendship and love of many of his most honoured and excellent people upon earth. And I have reason to thank him likewise, that he has given me an habitual recollection of those past dreadful scenes ; so that there is seldom a day of my life in which my thoughts are not led back to my former state of estrangement from him, and that pre-eminence of wretchedness into which my sins plunged me. I hope he has often sanctified this review, to abate in some measure the force of the temptations I have been since exposed to, to think myself something. If he gives me a liberty in preaching, or enables me to write a letter to please a fellow-worm, should it not suffice to keep me from being elated, to remember that I am the same person who once delighted to treat him as an impostor, to rank him with, or upon the comparison below, *Mohammed*? or to think that some of my unhappy companions (as I have reason to fear,) perished in their sins, who had just cause to charge the ruin of their souls to my account? For Satan himself, had he been upon earth in a bodily shape, could hardly have been more industrious in tempting to infidelity and profligacy than I was.

You have kindly sketched me out abundance of employment. I need not now complain for want of subjects, if I had but ability and leisure to fill up your plans. But if you were here a few days, a better knowledge of *me* and of my situation, would convince you how unable I am to answer your desires. Judge by this one instance. I have longed to thank you for your last letter from the day I received it, and yet almost five months have elapsed before I could set about it. Do not imagine by this, that my time is incessantly taken up with business of real importance. I hope I am not quite idle. But alas! as I grow in years an indolence grows upon me ; I cannot do as I would, nor even as I once could.

The letters I have thoughts of publishing, will be real correspondence—letters of friendship—returned to me by friends for that purpose ; some of them written more than twenty years ago. I believe there will be two volumes of them—I suppose they will contain the substance of the little the Lord has taught me upon a variety of subjects, but very few points in detail, as not one of them was penned with the most distant view to publication.

I have likewise upwards of three hundred hymns, which I purpose to prepare for the press in the course of the winter, if the Lord spares me so long and favours me with health. If I live to see these two designs completed, I believe I shall try to retrench my pen, and apply myself more closely to the word of God and prayer. For I have more reason than Mr. Hervey to be ashamed that I have written so much and read so little—and have read so much of other books and so little of the Scriptures.

I could hardly believe my eyes when I read your age. Twenty years and a half! O you are highly favoured! I was as old before I quitted the chair of the scorner. May the Lord preserve your life and health, and bless your studies. I hope he has much for you to do. It is an honour and a favour that he has so soon admitted you into his interior school—I mean the school of the cross. My short-sighted regard would wish your trials to be very few and very light. I can venture, however, to promise that you shall not have one too many or too heavy. He will do you good, and enable you to do others good by them. You will find your strength according to your day, and all shall contribute to enlarge your experience of his wisdom, power, and goodness. You are his, and not your own, therefore he has a right to put you in any situation which he sees most conducive to manifest his glory, and to do him service. And he is rich enough to make you abundant amends for all you can suffer for his sake. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart.

I must draw towards a close—other occasions will soon call me away. Write as often as you please: we love to hear from you. I will write as often as I can. Give my love to Mr. Anderson, Mr. Jameson, and all your friends. As I have little more upon my mind to offer in prose, I will annex two or three hymns to fill up the paper. I have a right to truth wherever I can find it, and some things in the Classics, though absurd as they were first applied, are beautiful and comfortable when Christianized, and directed to their proper objects: with this view, I have parodized two or three odes of Horace. If you and your friend Mr. Anderson approve the hint, I wish you to pursue it.

*THE POWER OF GRACE.*Hor. lib. 4. Ode 3. *Quem ne Melpomene*

- 1 HAPPY the birth when grace presides,
To form the future life!
In wisdom's paths the soul she guides,
Remote from noise and strife.
- 2 Since I have known the Saviour's name,
And what for me he bore;
No more I toil for empty fame,
I thirst for gold no more.
- 3 Plac'd by his hand in this retreat,
I make his love my theme;
And see that all the world calls great
Is but an empty dream.
- 4 Since he has rank'd my worthless name
Amongst his favour'd few,
Let the mad world, who scoff at them,
Revile and hate me too.
- 5 O thou! whose voice the dead can raise,
And soften hearts of stone,
And teach the dumb to sing thy praise,
This work is all thine own.
- 6 Thy wond'ring saints rejoice to see
A wretch like me restor'd;
And point and say, how chang'd is he,
Who once defied the Lord!
- 7 Grace bid me live, and taught my tongue
To aim at notes divine;
And grace accepts my feeble song;
The glory, Lord, be thine.

*BEHOLD, I AM WITH THEE IN ALL PLACES.*Hor. lib. 1. Ode 22. *Integer vite.*

- 1 THAT man no guard or weapon needs,
Whose heart the blood of Jesus knows;
But safe may pass, if duty leads,
Through burning sands, or mountain snows.
- 2 Releas'd from guilt, he feels no fear,
Redemption is his shield and tow'r;
He sees his Saviour always near,
To help in ev'ry trying hour.

- 3 Though I am weak and Satan strong,
 And often to assault me tries ;
 When Jesus is my theme and song,
 Abash'd the wolf before me flies.
- 4 His love possessing, I am blest,
 Secure, whatever change may come ;
 Whether I go to east or west,
 With him, I still shall be at home.
- 5 If plac'd beneath the northern pole,
 The winter reigns with rigour there ;
 His gracious beams would cheer my soul,
 And make a spring throughout the year.
- 6 Or if the desert's sun-burnt soil,
 My lonely dwelling e'er should prove ;
 His presence would support my toil,
 Whose smile is life, whose voice is love.



MAKE THY FACE SHINE UPON THY SERVANTS.

Hor. lib. 4. Ode 3. Divis orte benis.

- 1 SON of God ! thy people's shield !
 Must we still thine absence mourn ?
 Let thy promise be fulfill'd,
 Thou hast said, I will return.
- 2 Gracious Leader, now appear,
 Shine upon us with thy light ;
 Like the spring, when thou art near,
 Days and suns are doubly bright.
- 3 As a mother counts the days,
 Till her absent son she see ;
 Longs and watches, weeps and prays,
 So our spirits long for thee.
- 4 Come, and let us feel thee nigh ;
 Then thy sheep shall feed in peace,
 Plenty bless us from on high,
 Evil from amongst us cease.
- 5 With thy love, and voice, and aid,
 Thou canst ev'ry care assuage ;
 Then we shall not be afraid,
 Though the world and Satan rage.
- 6 Thus each day for thee we'll spend,
 While our callings we pursue :

And the thoughts of such a friend,
Shall each night our joy renew.

7 Let thy light be ne'er withdrawn,
Golden days attend us long ;
Thus we pray at early dawn,
This shall be our evening song.

I can hardly call these so much as an imitation ; I have taken or left, just as it suited me. But when Horace wrote his odes, he little thought how free I should make with him. Oh had he known Jesus, how would his heart have felt when he looked to him instead of Mæcenas, as his *Decus et tutamen*, then he would have known where to have addressed that fine line, so sadly misapplied to Augustus,

Cum tot sustineas ac tanta negotia Solus.

And Virgil likewise would have forgotten Daphnis, and sung of the good Shepherd.

Formosi preoris custos, fermosior ipse.

I love to despoil the idols of their ornaments, and bring them in for the service of the sanctuary. I could wish some person better skilled in the Classics, and of more leisure, would extract all the beautiful lines they contain, which of right only belong to the Saviour, or his people.

Have you read Ganganelli's letters ? They are, in my judgment, admirable. Doubly so, considering from what quarter they come. But I must break off. I seldom write such long letters as I do to you. Mrs. Newton sends her hearty love and best wishes to you. Hopes you will see her sister.

I am, Dear Sir,
Your affectionate friend and servant,

JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Bucks, July 10, 1778.

THE REV. JOHN NEWTON TO THE REV. WM. BARLASS.

My dear Sir,

THIS comes to meet you or to wait for you at Anstruther, and will contain some brief answers to the several particulars in your last very acceptable letter, for fear any thing might prevent my writing if I deferred it till towards March.

I congratulate you on your entrance into the ministry, and upon the trials as well as the encouragements you have met with. Both are necessary. The tongue of the learned, which can speak a word in season to weary souls, is only acquired in the schools of experience and the cross. We must feel ourselves in order to feel for others. In this view our great Teacher and High-Priest is set forth to us, as one who learned by suffering, and as able to succour others, because tempted himself. I rejoice that you are determined chiefly to tell the people of Jesus Christ crucified, and to leave controversy and dispute to others.

I compare the rules which have been, or may be offered, either to ministers or believers, to lasts for shoes; they must be accommodated to the foot, or else, though the shoe may *look* well, it will not *set* well. The rules of God's word, indeed, discover their Divine origin in this respect, that being founded upon an exact knowledge of the heart of man, and the nature of his present state, they are applicable to all persons, times, and circumstances; no real inconvenience follows from observing them, but the neglect of them is always of ill consequence. But the rules of men are too personal, partial, and short-sighted to deserve our notice any farther than as hints, which we may follow, or not, just as we find them suit. I should be glad to entrust you with my judgment, *pro re nata*, in any point which might occasionally arise. But to offer you such copious advice as you desire concerning the matter and manner of preaching, would not only be assuming too much, but would be acting contrary to my judgment and professed principles. I have formerly fettered myself by following other people's rules, and therefore ought not to shackle my friend by prescribing to you. You have the word of grace, the throne of grace, and the Spirit of grace with you. Under this Divine direction, what passes within you and around you, will furnish you with better rules for your own management, than you could possibly receive from the wisest man upon earth, who was

not exactly in your situation. *Res, ætas, usus semper aliquid appetent novi.*

The one question you have specified, rather surprised me as coming from Scotland; where I thought written sermons were only of a late date, and even now only in use amongst those who, having departed from the great truths of the Gospel, are of course necessitated to live upon their own funds. I will so far answer it, as to tell you simply how I have been led. My first essay as a preacher was in the year 58, (six years before my admission into the established church,) in a Dissenting meeting-house at Leeds. I attempted it wholly extempore. But I thought I had my general and particular heads very methodically ranged in my mind. I set off tolerably well, though with no small fear and trembling. But I soon feared and trembled much more, for after speaking about ten minutes, my mouth was stopped. I stared at the people and they at me, but not a word more could I speak, but was forced to come down, and leave the people, some smiling, and some weeping. My pride and self-sufficiency were sorely mortified, and for two years afterward I could not look at the place without feeling the heart-ach, and as it were saying to myself, *Hic troja stetit*. This disaster made me conclude it would be absolutely impossible for me ever to preach without book. Accordingly I began to compose sermons at full length. The next time I was asked to preach, I did not feel much trepidation. I had my discourse in my pocket, and did not much doubt but I was able to read it. And I read it sure enough. But being near-sighted, and rather ashamed to hold up my notes in view, I held my head close down to the cushion, and when I began, I durst not take my eye off for a moment, being impressed with a fear that I should not readily fix it again upon the right part of the page. So that I hardly saw any body in the place during the whole time; and I looked much more like a dull schoolboy poring over his lesson, than a preacher of the Gospel. I was not much less disconcerted this time than the former; and applied to my notes, the poet's words, *Nec tecum, nec sine te*. At length the Lord put it in my heart to have a meeting for a few select friends in my own house on the Lord's day evening, which I continued for about the last three years I lived at Liverpool. And in these exercises, he was pleased in some measure to open my mouth. When I came to Olney, and long afterward, I used to write about as much as I have now written,

upon the texts before I preached ; but for some years past, I have seldom written a page. Very often, I cannot fix upon my text before I am in the pulpit ; and have frequently begun, when I have known no more what I should say, or how I should handle the subject, than any of the people before me ; and this not of choice or through indolence, but of necessity: And at some such seasons, so far as I can judge of myself, I have preached to as much advantage, as if I had studied my sermon for a month. Various have been the methods my wise and gracious Lord has taken, to break down my spirit of self-dependence, and to hide pride from me. Of all the maxims I have met with about preaching, I most admire that of Luther, *Bene precasse, est bene studii per.*

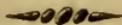
If my mind was in a right frame towards the Lord, I think I should not be greatly embarrassed if called to preach at five minutes warning to the most respectable congregation. But often it is otherwise with me, and I am forced to venture, with my heart sadly out of tune. How often, and how justly might he stop my mouth, and put me to shame before the people ! But he is merciful.

When you have read Gilpin on Temptation, you will, I think, be satisfied, that any attempt of mine or perhaps of any other person, to write upon the same subject, would be *actum agere*. He is one of the few writers, who leave those who would come after them very little to say.

I am now busy in transcribing the hymns for the press. They will make a pretty sizeable volume, and if health and opportunity are afforded, I hope they will be published in the spring. As you will then see them *all*, I may fill up the paper with plain prose in the interval. The letters of correspondence, I think will not appear till after the hymns. My letters to Mrs. N—— are not at all suited for the view of the public.

I know not the law or rule about book property. If the right is originally in the author, I certainly never parted with mine. I do not mean to make any transfer of right, but you have my consent to do what you please with any of my books. The review was published upon a joint account ; though no formal agreement passed. As I never received advantage from it, I suppose the bookseller can have no right to interfere against a publication in Scotland. And if it might be (as you think,) useful to others, *that* is the profit I chiefly aim at in writing. I published six sermons (as intended for the pul-

pit) before I was in orders, soon after I was refused upon my first application. These I suppose you have not seen—they are out of print. I have one copy, but know not how to send it to you. If you come hither you shall have it.



THE REV. JOHN NEWTON TO THE REV. WM. BARLASS.

My dear Friend,

YOUR acceptable letter was written the day we left Olney and followed me to Leicester. This county, in which we purposed spending a month, was seven years ago a very dark land. But the Lord has since caused the light of his Gospel to shine at Leicester, here, and in three or four other towns. He placed Mr. Robinson at Leicester, a young man of Cambridge, whom he furnished with abilities, zeal, and meekness suited to the station. For as he was only curate at first, it seemed no easy matter so to obviate the prejudices of an ignorant and numerous people, as to be able to maintain his standing, and at the same time to be faithful to their souls. But the Lord was with him, and therefore he prospered. And the Lord has since fixed him, and given him one of the five churches there for his own. He has been and is very useful; preaches to large congregations, and there are a number of people who are turned from darkness to light, and walk worthy of the Gospel.

This place fell to the lot of Dr. Ford of Oxford, whose name perhaps may have reached you. He was intimate with the late Archbishop of Canterbury, and was apparently in the high road to preferment. But when the Lord revealed his Gospel to him, and gave him a thirst for the good of souls, those who thought to promote him to honour were offended. He expects to live and die Vicar of Melton-Mowbray, and as this is all he has a prospect of, so I believe it is all he wishes for. He has a higher honour than the world can give—that of winning souls for Christ. I spent ten or twelve days at Leicester, and preached nine times in my way hither: I purpose returning thither again on Monday next, and hope to be at home by 8th of May, calling at some intermediate places in my way. I am willing to sketch a hasty answer to yours while I am abroad.

I am glad an acquaintance is commenced between you and Armstrong; I hope it will grow into a friendship, profitable to them, and mutually agreeable. And if we are spared to see another year, I shall hope it will bring you to Olney. Even one year seems a long space in future, though twenty years, when they are passed, appear but as a span. How often have I been weak enough to wish the interval away which stood between me and some pleasure I had expectation of. I wish to be freed from this weakness, and therefore, though I long to see you, I will try to wait patiently from day to day till the time come. For I am well satisfied in my judgment that the Lord's time must be best.

If I could prevent or cure your illness by a word or a wish, I would do it. But perhaps my intention would be better than my judgment. For have I not good reason to believe that you will never be ill, when health upon the whole is best for you? That we are well a single day is of the Lord's blessing; and every indisposition, both as to the season, degree, and continuance, is of his appointment likewise. When he sees it needful to remind us of our frailty and our dependence upon him, he will do it. And when his gracious end in sending affliction is answered, he will remove it. Till then, means and medicines cannot remove what he lays upon us for good: then, though medicines and physicians have all failed, he will send his word and heal us. Happy state of them that love him! Every changing dispensation is to them an effect of the same unceasing care and attention towards them. To his gracious care therefore I commend and entrust you, not doubting but he will give you reason to say he does all things well.

I would encourage you by all means to aim at extempore preaching. The great difficulty seems to be owing to unbelief, and an undue regard to self. Both of which are perhaps strengthened by the custom and example of those around us. We see that pleaders in the courts of justice, and speakers in parliament, can express themselves with propriety and ease for an hour or two, or longer, on the subjects which they understand and have at heart. There are doubtless many merchants who could at a minute's warning and without premeditation, furnish out a long discourse upon the nature and advantages of commerce. I can see no reason why ministers of the Gospel should be the only people who must be necessarily con-

fined to notes and schemes ; or why, if we can talk upon other subjects, and declare what we have seen, heard, and felt in common life with liberty, we should be subject to a peculiar restraint with regard to those points which our experience and study are always conversant with. I should think the importance of the Gospel in itself, and our call and appointment of the Lord to preach it, would rather enlarge our faculties, and draw forth the fullest exertion of our powers, than limit their exercise. Why should a man who is continually attending to these things, and labours to be *Totus in illis*, be always obliged to *read* the sentiments he has formed of them ? Besides, we have a promise of the Lord's presence and influence to assist, and in a degree to inspire us when we are simply devoted to his service, and are employed in it. There will be something of an awkwardness and hesitation at the first, like that of a person who is beginning to learn to swim, but habit and frequency will make it more easy. I do not mean, however, that we shall ever acquire by use, such a mechanical readiness as will free us from all difficulty. A man who has employed many years in making baskets or tables, is so far master of his work, that he is morally certain beforehand of success in his next attempt. I believe it may be so in a good measure with public speakers, whose business lies in temporals, and whose dependence is upon their own funds. But this kind of ability would not be desirable for a minister of the Gospel, because it would not be safe. Our dependence must be upon the Lord : we are strongest when we feel ourselves weak, and best qualified for service when most sensible that without him we can do nothing. He will fulfil his promise of assistance ; but then at times he may so far suspend it, as to make us feel that when we do well we have nothing to ascribe to ourselves. An extempore preacher is subject to mortifying disappointments ; and if at one time he comes down from the pulpit a little elated, and not at all displeased to hear the sermon spoken of ; at another, he will wish to hide himself, and hardly bear to be looked at. At least this will be the case for a time ; and till the Lord by a variety of gracious and wholesome discipline, has in some good measure broken the spirit of self, and made him indifferent what his fellow-creatures think of him, provided whether he preaches with liberty or not, he has grace to be faithful.

It may happen likewise, that when you have a very poor plain small congregation before you, you may speak with so much enlarge-

ment and pertinency, that you may be tempted to think your sermon almost thrown away upon them, and secretly wish you had had the Synod for your auditory, who would have been more competent judges of your performance. Afterward, if called to preach to a very respectable assembly, and when you are very willing to make good the expectations which report may have raised concerning you, the Lord may see fit to let you appear among them straitened, barren, and confused. To these trials you will be always exposed, though you may not perhaps be often actually pinched with them. The Lord does not put us to needless pain. If we are preserved humble and self-abased, he will usually afford his presence in the work, and inspire us with a becoming confidence and freedom. But if self lift up its head, if pride creep in, if we go forth as if we were wise or good, leaning to our abilities, experience, and former services, then it is very merciful in him, by leaving us a little to ourselves to remind us what poor creatures we are.

I write in the midst of continual interruptions. Was willing to send you a piece of a letter, if I could not write with my usual prolixity. With respect to conversing with the sick, I know of no rule comparable with that of James i. 5. I mean that circumstances are so various, that a proper judgment can hardly be formed, but upon the spot.

Mrs. Cunningham complained to you that we are tardy in writing. And I complain to you of her, that she is at least equally guilty of the same fault. Pray admonish her the next time you see her. Of late, however, both she and I have been tolerably punctual.

My dear is tolerably well. One view in our present excursion, was for the benefit of her health. I thought exercise, change of air, and objects, might be serviceable to her, by the Lord's blessing; and I hope it will prove so.

I must break off—we join in love—present mine to all your friends, who think kindly of me on your account.

I am, Dear Sir,

Your affectionate friend and servant,

JOHN NEWTON.

Melton-Mowbray, May 1, 1779.

THE REV. JOHN NEWTON TO THE REV. WM. BARLASS.

August 8.

My dear Sir,

How long have I been wishing to write to you ! At length the time I hope is come, at least to begin my letter ; but interruptions are so frequent here, it may possibly be some time yet before I can finish it. How different is my situation here from what it was at Olney ! O my beloved leisure, my sweet retirements, how should I regret your loss, if I was not checked by the thought, that the post I am in must needs be the best upon the whole, because the Lord has assigned it for me ! I am necessitated now to be often abroad, and when at home frequently taken up with visitants, so that I have little time for writing, or even for reading the good word of God.

Mr. Culbert, (who by the by does not call on me so often as I could wish) informed me of your fall and your hurt, but gave me the pleasing assurance that you had received no injury, but what it was hoped a little time would repair. I long for a confirmation of this hope under your own hand. I was prepared to sympathize with you, by a fall which I had soon after my coming to this house, at my own door, which dislocated my shoulder, but the dispensation was sweetened with so many mercies, that I was not permitted to regret it, no, not for an hour. I trust you likewise found the grace of our Lord sufficient for you, and your strength made proportionable to your day. May we both have reason to praise him for our trials, and to place them, as well as our comforts, in the list of his tender mercies. Nothing befalls us by chance ; the Lord was as near us, as attentive to us, when we fell, as at other times. How often have we gone out and come in in safety ; so often perhaps that we were apt to look on it as a matter of course, and the Lord saw that a little change was needful, to quicken the sense of our dependence upon him, and our gratitude for our daily preservation. Perhaps Satan was spreading some dangerous snare for our feet, and the Lord our keeper took this course to disappoint him. Or perhaps it was a mean of preserving us from some greater harm, which might otherwise have overtaken us. However, if we cannot assign the particular reason now, we shall know hereafter ; and at present we may be assured he doth all things well. My arm is

now nearly as well as the other, though there are a few motions which it is not yet quite capable of with ease. In time it may be quite well ; and if not, it is well enough for common use. The small remaining inconvenience will be sufficiently balanced, if it may be a standing memento, and sanctified to the making me attentive to the Lord's hand.

The little disagreeables that occurred about the publication in Scotland, have been entirely surmounted and removed by the obliging attention of Mr. More, whose care and kindness deserve my warmest acknowledgment. My letters have been some time in the press, and I suppose will be published in about six or eight weeks ; there will be two volumes : I might I suppose have enlarged my collection to four or six ; but I think two volumes are sufficient.

Yes, my friend, I am now in London—the last place I should have chosen for myself, but the Lord who led me hither has reconciled me so far, that I seem now to prefer it to the country. My apparent opportunities for usefulness are doubtless much enlarged, and here, as in a centre, I am likely to see most of my friends, who are fixed in different and distant places, but are, upon one occasion or other, usually led to London in the course of the year.

While I was writing I was called away, and now, after an interval of nine days, I hope to fill and forward the sheet. It is a time of trial at Olney, but I believe there is a need be for it. I had provided a minister to succeed me, but the people were infatuated to refuse him, though they knew him, and could not but respect him. Now they wish for him, but it is too late. His name is Scott, a neighbouring curate, whom the Lord was pleased to call and teach himself. I showed Mr. Culbert the narrative of his conversion, which he lately published by the title of *The force of Truth*. It is in my judgment one of the clearest, most striking, and satisfactory accounts of a supernatural change, that has appeared in print at any time, and I wish it may have found its way into Scotland. This man, however, the Olney people wished might not be their minister. The Lord gave them their wish. They have another, who is in the list of Gospel preachers, but a very different man from Mr. Scott. They are not happy with him, nor can they be so. But they must bear their burden till the death of Mr. Browne, the vicar, who appointed him. Then I hope the Lord will give them a

proper shepherd again, and by that time I trust they will be prepared to receive and value such a one. They behaved, in the main, affectionately to me ; and I loved them so, that it was in my heart, and in my prayers, to live and die with them. But our privileges were great, and the enjoyment of them for a long course of years without interruption, made them seem to too many as a matter of course. Weeds sprang up—offences appeared. I hope it was in mercy to them, as well as a mercy to me, that the Lord removed me. They now feel the difference. Such, alas ! is the deplorable evil of the human heart, that we are prone to surfeit upon our privileges, and can seldom long enjoy our own wishes without hazard. This makes changes necessary, and under the management of our wise and great Shepherd, crosses prove comforts, losses gains, apparent hinderances real helps, and the dark, dark cloud of disappointment brings us showers of blessings.

I am wonderfully at peace in my new settlement, and I hope not unuseful. My lecture on the Lord's day evening is much crowded. My dispensation likewise seems to be peace. My congregation is made up from various and discordant parties, who in the midst of differences can agree in one point, to hear patiently a man who is of no party. I say little to my hearers of the things wherein they differ, but aim to lead them all to a growing and more experimental knowledge of the Son of God, and a life of faith in him. The physician's business is with the body itself, how to preserve or restore health. The care of the dress, the knowledge of fashions, a skilful contrivance about the size, shape, or colour of the coat, is the business of the tailor. But I cannot submit to be a tailor in divinity. If I see my patients thriving in the power of godliness, I leave them to the Lord and their own consciences as to the form.

My thoughts often make excursions north of Tweed, where the Lord has given me hearts and friends whom I probably shall never see in the flesh. But there is a day coming, when all the chosen race shall meet before the throne. *O præclarum diem !* indeed. May the prospect of it animate our pursuits, and spiritualize our aims. Yet, why do I speak of seeing each other ? We shall then see Jesus. See him as he is. Be like him, and be with him for ever. *O præclarum diem !* we may say again. Who can state the disproportion between the light and momentary sufferings of the present life, and

the exceeding weight and eternal duration of the glory which shall then be revealed ?

Adieu, believe me yours

Sincerely,

JOHN NEWTON.

Charles's Square, Hoxton, London, August 17, 1780.



THE REV. JOHN NEWTON TO THE REV. WM. BARLASS.

Dear Sir,

AFTER long wishing and waiting to hear from you, I was gratified about a fortnight since. The first thing upon my mind is to express my satisfaction, that the Lord has healed your broken bones. I trust the experience that dispensation gave you, both of your own weakness and of his goodness, will be long remembered, and of daily use. The Lord has doubtless a voice to us in those incidents which more immediately affect ourselves, and likewise in those things which happen to others, so far as they come under our notice. And not only your own fall, but the fall of the poor postilion, was for your instruction. Happy, if we could consider every event and occurrence in life as a messenger from him, to give us some farther intimation of his will, or some farther illustration of his word. We are always in his school, and might be always learning ; but we are too often ready to think ourselves out of school, and then, like heedless children, we think little about our lesson, as though, like them, we were only to learn by intervals. But the rule of our Master allows us no playdays or seasons of absolute vacation, and it is to our loss if we allow ourselves any. Could our eye and heart be fixed upon him from day to day, from morning to night, we should profit apace. We might learn not only in the closet, or in the sanctuary, but in the street, and upon the road. All the dispensations which we call extraordinary, are mercifully designed to recall our attention, to quicken our industry, and to advance our progress. And though some of them are at the time not joyous, but grievous, they are all equally good and gracious.

I believe the Lord will, in his own hour, give you the habit of extempore preaching, which is as desirable in your situation, as it

is in mine. For, perhaps, I preach more frequently than you. To commit your sermons to memory must be a heavy burden indeed; it seems to me more inconvenient than reading them. And I think I could read with more spirit and probability of impressing the auditory, than if I repeated them by heart, as we commonly say, though in propriety I should rather call it repeating by *head*, for my heart would have but little concern in it. But if you will be an extempore preacher, you must risk, and even suffer, something. You must not despise the day of small things, nor expect that liberty and compass in your service at first, which you may afterward, by the Lord's blessing, attain to. To him that hath, that useth when he hath, more shall be given. When there is a competent stock of knowledge and ideas in the mind, and a person is not destitute of the gift of utterance, the chief hinderance and difficulty, as to extempore preaching, arises from an undue regard to self. That thought, What will my fellow-worms think of me and my performance, will be ready to stop our mouths. This you must pray against, and the Lord will deliver you from it. Ah, what a solicism! Indeed, what high treason against our Lord are we often guilty of. We profess a zeal for his glory, and for the good of souls; we know that we are charged with a message of the utmost importance, and yet are apt to be more concerned about the manner of delivering it, than for the success. If you were apprized that a person was coming to consult you in your study, about his soul concerns, it is probable you would not pen down what you wished to say to him, and commit it to memory beforehand, but you would talk to him according to the view his conversation would give you of his case. And, perhaps, what you would then say to a single person, with little premeditation, might be as useful and acceptable to a thousand, if they could hear it, as the most studious sermon you could compose. The Lord has brought you into the ministry, and given you a sincere desire to serve him in it. Depend upon him, therefore, so to bless your studies at other times, as that you may be enabled to speak for him in public with composure and discretion, and he will not disappoint you. An act of simple faith upon him, will give you more ability, than many hours rummaging for something out of your own stock. When we have the fountain of living waters running

close by us, why should we weary ourselves with hewing out broken cisterns ?

Yet you may begin gradually. Continue to write your sermons, only abridge the quantity. When you have fixed your scheme and plan, as you proceed to write on the several particulars, leave room, sometimes under one head, sometimes under another, for such enlargement as the Lord shall afford you at the time of preaching. You will probably find some of these additions the most animated, acceptable, and noticed parts of your discourse. And this will encourage you to go on, writing less and speaking more. It is thus some people learn to swim. Man, by nature, is buoyant, and as capable of swimming as a duck. But people at first are afraid of the water, and think swimming is an acquired art. Whereas the chief art is, by practice to get rid of those fears, which, by bereaving us of confidence and presence of mind, make that impracticable, which would otherwise be easy. A young swimmer, surrounded with corks, as he stands ready to jump into the water, is an emblem of a preacher mounting the pulpit with his sermon in his pocket, or in his head. Yet I would not hastily take the youth's corks away : let him begin so, by degrees he will venture with less quantity of cork, and at length without any. Why should not preachers do the same, but be encumbered with their corks to the end of life.

I would advise you likewise, as you have opportunity in houses and families, to read the Scriptures to a few friends in an expository way, not obliging yourself to explain or enlarge upon every verse in the chapter, but just to drop a hint here and there occasionally, as the thought offers to your mind, without any previous contrivance or reflection. This will habituate you to the sound of your own voice, and you cannot conceive till you try, how imperceptibly and surely you will find the practice more and more easy. At first you may hardly know how to begin ; in a little time you may find it almost as difficult when to stop. Only remember, that while you use the means, your real actual help must come, not from the exertion of your own abilities, but from the Lord who made heaven and earth. Exodus iv. 10, 11. If your heart be right with him, you will first creep, then walk, then run, and sometimes you will mount as with eagle's wings. Think of pleaders at the bar, and speeches

in parliament—these have no promise from God ; they lean to their own understanding. Yet how forcibly and pertinently will they speak for an hour or two, or more. And sometimes occasions so vary, and they meet with such unexpected terms, that we are sure neither their notes nor their memories could much help them. But they understand their subject, and they have it at heart, and are previously furnished with general knowledge, which they adapt to the present occasion.

I am sure you have a competent fund, and by what I hear of you I judge you are not tongue-tied out of the pulpit ; and therefore I doubt not, but if you earnestly pray and strive in this matter you will succeed. You have your fightings and your fears, especially at first, and they will sometimes return upon you. But, in the main, you will be approved as an able minister of the New Testament.

Nec facundia deseret—nec lucidus ordo.

You will find something more on this subject, in *Cardiphonia*, lately published in two volumes, which I have desired Mr. Culbert to forward you, and beg your acceptance of in my name.

My first essay as a preacher was in a dissenting meeting-house, at Leeds, in Yorkshire, in the year 1758. I do not know that I had a very overweening opinion of my own abilities ; I feared and trembled abundantly, but I was determined to set off extempore. I did so. I opened my discourse with a passable exordium, divided my subject into four heads, had subdivisions under each in my mind, and was beginning to think I should do pretty well. But before I had spoken ten minutes I was stopped, like Hannibal upon the Alps. My ideas forsook me, darkness and confusion filled up their place. I stood on a precipice, and could not advance a step forward. I stared at the people, and they at me. But I remained as silent as Friar Bacon's head, and was forced to come down *re infecta*. My two worst enemies, self and Satan, seized me at the bottom of the stairs. I hope the Lord has forgiven the abominations of my heart, which showed themselves on that occasion.

This experiment seemed, at the time, fully to convince me, not only of temerity, but that I was absolutely unable to preach extempore, that I ever should be so, and that I might as well attempt to fly. I then began to compose, and my next essay (in another

place) was with a written sermon. I was not so much afraid this time, for I knew I could read if my eyes did not suddenly fail me. So I read them a sermon. The moment I began my eyes were riveted to the book, from a fear which got hold of me, that if I looked off I should not readily find the line again. Thus, with my head hanging down, (for I am near-sighted) and fixed like a statue, I conned over my lesson, like a boy learning to read, but I did not stop till I came to the end. I think I was rather more out of conceit with myself this time than the former. What was to be done next? I had tried the two extremes to little purpose, and there seemed to me to be no medium between them. I looked sorrowfully at my sermon-book, and said,

Nec tecum, nec sine te——.

I began to think my views to the ministry were presumptuous. I thought at least, that if the Lord was pleased to accept my desire to serve him, he would not accept my service, because I had been so vile a creature; as he accepted David's desire to build his house, but did not employ him because he had shed blood. And yet, notwithstanding all disappointments and discouragements, he was pleased at length to admit me into his vineyard, and to open my mouth.

However, I should tell you, that long after he had given me some liberty of speech, and not many years ago, at Olney, in the midst of my own people, and before a full congregation, my mouth was stopped again. That is, my mind was so confused I only talked nonsense, and thought it my duty to tell the people I could not preach, because the Lord suspended his assistance. I therefore stopped, and told them so. When I had made this acknowledgement, I had liberty again, only I could not resume the subject I had been upon. But I spoke freely on what had happened, and perhaps it was one of our best opportunities. It was so to me. My pride was kept down, my mind perfectly composed, and I went home as easy as if the whole parish had admired my sermon.

Many exercises have I had about preaching; nor am I wholly without them still. I must add I do not wish to be quite free. To be an extempore preacher, with some degree of acceptance and popularity, is an ensnaring situation. It affords much grounds for

the workings of pride and self-complaisance, and therefore it is a mercy if the Lord is pleased to give us frequent proofs of our own inability, notwithstanding what we can do when he puts forth his power in us. Experience likewise proves, that we do not always preach best when we are most pleased with our own doings, at least if we account it the best preaching when we are most useful. Such I think should be the standard. When is a fisherman's best fishing-time? I think, not when he has the neatest rods, hooks, or lines, nor even when he has the pleasantest weather, but when he catches the greatest quantity of good fishes. When we have made a poor sermon, and are almost afraid or ashamed to look our hearers in the face, the Lord may put forth his power in our weakness, and work great things by our little sermon. When we think we have done bravely, and pleased the people's ears, and sent them home to praise the fine discourse, their hearts may be quite unaffected. If we were perfectly mortified to self, we should submit to be pitied or laughed at by the bulk of a congregation, if we might but be useful to a few. And we should be dissatisfied with the applause of all, except we could be serviceable to some. I wish any thing I have hastily written may encourage you. I long to hear that you are freed from the drudgery of committing your sermons to memory. I long to hear that you are an extempore preacher. It will save a deal of time, which might be employed to better purposes. But I would not be impatient. I hope the Lord will lead and guide you to what is best. I only say, If you can believe, you shall be established.

The above was written about a fortnight since. I must now date my paragraphs. This is the 22d Feb. It may be another fortnight before I can get my packet ready, but will do my best. The people at Olney have had time and cause to repent their hasty refusal of Mr. Scott. But I hope all will work together for good. The person they have had since my removal is going, and Mr. Scott is to succeed him. This is a revolution in their favour which I could not hope for; but the Lord works wonderfully. Lord Dartmouth is the patron of Olney, so that there is a fair probability of a Gospel minister having the living after Mr. Brown's decease.

I thank you for your prayers and good wishes respecting my new charge. They are in some measure answered. The Lord is very gracious. I am favoured with liberty and acceptance, I trust with

a degree of success. I meet with no violent opposition, and though my immediate parishioners do not attend in such numbers as I could wish, the deficiency is made up from other quarters, and I have no cause to complain for want of hearers. The bulk of them are professors. My congregation on Wednesdays, and on the Lord's day evening, is made up of almost all denominations. I now come to take notice of your queries.

1. Though we cannot fence the Lord's table by ecclesiastical authority, we can, and with some good effect, from the pulpit. Neither is it possible to know all our communicants personally, but I believe few come to our sacraments whom I would wish to keep away.

2. As to the state of religion in this city. There are in the establishment (to begin with that) but two Gospel ministers who have churches of their own—Mr. Romaine and myself. I believe you need not my information concerning his abilities and success. He is an eminent preacher, and has crowded auditories. But we have about ten clergymen, who, either as morning preachers or lecturers, preach either on the Lord's day, or at different times of the week, in perhaps fifteen or sixteen churches. The tabernacle and Tottenham Court chapel are very large; they are in the hands of Mr. Whitfield's trustees, and the Gospel is dispensed in them to many thousands of people by a diversity of ministers, clergy, dissenters, or lay preachers, who are, in general, lively, faithful, and acceptable men. There is likewise the Lock, and another chapel, in Westminster; the former served chiefly by Mr. De Coetegen, the latter by Mr. Peckwell—well attended. As is likewise Lady Huntingdon's chapel, which will hold about two thousand, and is supplied by able ministers. There is also another, not so large, in the same connexion. Mr. Wesley has one large chapel, and several smaller; and though they are Arminians, as we say, there are many excellent Christians, and some good preachers, among them. There are likewise several preachers, whom I may call Independent Methodists, of the Methodist stock, and something in the dissenting form, but stand singly, not being connected with any of the dissenting boards. I should suppose that the churches, chapels, &c. which are open on the Lord's day, for those whom the world calls Methodists, as distinct from Dissenters, will contain thirty thousand people, and in general they are all crowded.

Now for the Dissenters. The Presbyterians, excepting a few, which are called the Scotch churches, such as Dr. Trotter's, are deviated widely from the way of their forefathers. Among their ministers are men of learning and abilities, but hardly any who preach the doctrines of the Cross. Their auditories are rather polite and elegant than numerous, and their profession of religion not very strict. Experience and observation proves, that no doctrine, but Jesus Christ and him crucified, will turn the stream of the heart, or withstand the stream of the world. The Baptists are divided into general and particular—the latter and sounder is, I believe, the larger part. They are a respectable people, have many good ministers, are tenacious of the truth. They are, I think, over zealous about the point of baptism, and their numbers are kept up and increased, more by the proselytes they gain from among other denominations than by conversions under their own preachers. The Independents, for the most part, retain a form of sound words, though some appear verging to a declension in doctrine. The life and glory I apprehend is abated among them as a body. There are ministers among them very sound, judicious, and able preachers, who are but poorly attended; and conformity to the evil world seems growing among those who are non-conformists in some respects. We have further, in London, and in some other places, settlements of the *Unitas Fratrum*, the Brethren, or, as they are more vulgarly called, the Moravians. These are a people little known in England; popular prejudice is strong against them, and mine was very strong once. There are some singularities in their constitution, which I do not admire! but some of my most endeared connexions are with persons of this name, and I do not know more excellent, spiritual, evangelical people in the land. Thus I have given you my thoughts of the Lord's *floor* in this city. In the great abounding of profession which prevails, there are doubtless too many who bear no nearer relation to his true church than the chaff does to the wheat; but I hope the number of solid exemplary believers is very considerable, and I hope the Lord's work is growing and spreading both in city and country. Every year adds to the number of evangelical clergymen, and the Lord still maintains a succession of promising young men in both the universities; some of whom are ordained every season; yet the number of serious students is still kept up by others,

whose hearts he inclines to devote themselves to sanctuary service. This is almost the only encouraging sign we have in this dark and awful day, and it does encourage me to hope, that sinful as we are, the Lord will not give us up to the will of our enemies, because he has a remnant, and a work amongst us.

3. Your next question is concerning Popery. I am not competently informed what proportion the Papists bear to other dissenters in this kingdom. But I apprehend that we are more in danger of being overrun with infidelity than Popery. Nor do I believe the Papists are remarkably increased. I am no friend to Popish errors, but I could not in conscience join the Protestant association. I did not wish for the act in favour of the Papists; I thought it granted too much. But when it had passed, I could not join in the petition for a total repeal, and to bring upon them all the penalties to which they were before liable. The first movers of the association were most of them my friends. I doubt not but they acted conscientiously, but I thought them mistaken in their principles. I think the Papists should be restrained from teaching the children of Protestants. But I conceive they have as good a right to judge for themselves, and to educate their own children, as I have. It appears to me that our Lord's kingdom is not of this world, and that his subjects have no warrant from his word to inflict pains and penalties upon any sort of people in matters pertaining to conscience, of which he alone is the Lord and the Judge. The Protestant association was for a time unnoticed, at length it spread and became popular, was adopted by thousands, whose whole religion, I fear, consisted in a cry against Popery. It sounded in my ears at last like the old cry, *Μεγαλη η Αρτηςμις*, and at length issued in those horrible riots, which will leave a lasting stain upon that part of our history. I am persuaded, the better part of the association abhorred those outrages as much as myself. But though they had no such design, they proved the occasion. And though they meant well, I considered the event as a token of the Lord's disapprobation of the methods they took. It seemed at the time as if the giving the Papists more liberty, was the only sin the nation was guilty of, the only evil that called for redress. There was no association formed or petition thought of for the suppression of the abominable profanation of the Lord's day, of adultery, drunkenness, profaneness, or perjury—no apprehension entertained of those

evils which, though almost universal among us, would not have been suffered in the better days of Pagan Rome. But the allowing liberty to Papists appeared the chief thing, the one thing to be complained of and guarded against. I did not wonder at the issue. The Lord will pour contempt upon a spirit of intolerance, even when manifested by his own people.

I am perfectly well satisfied with the Scotch edition of my publications, and only sorry that you and Mr. More had so much trouble about them, and that I could not avoid requesting the first impression of the narrative might be suppressed. The words *late curate*, were in the title by my express desire. If people should think the author dead, you may tell them you have it under his own hand that by the mercy of God he is still living. But the words do not imply this sense, only that he is no longer curate of Olney.

I desired Mr. Culbert either to come to me, or to call on my bookseller for two sets of Cardiphonia, one for you, and one for Mr. More. He called here yesterday when I was abroad, and left word a ship is to sail to-day. I cannot see to him to-day. If the ship goes without them, I shall be sorry he gave me so short a notice. But I hope he will apply to the bookseller. If not I will provide against the next opportunity. Mr. Culbert I love, but I seldom see him; and when I do his modesty keeps him too silent; and though I am full enough of talk when I am set a going, I am like some pumps into which you must put water, if you would have any out. I am remarkably awkward at beginning conversation. I do not find by any thing Mr. Culbert says, that he has as yet heard any of our Gospel preachers in the establishment. The very liberal, candid and kind spirit I have found in Mr. More, and Mr. Barlass, will hardly lead me to suppose, that he is restrained by a rule of this Secession; and, on the other hand, the amiable mildness of Mr. Culbert, makes me ready to think he must have some reason unknown to me which prevents him. I think it would be well if all bars and buts, which prevent a free communication between those who are led by the same Spirit to the same Saviour were removed. I should have conversed with him a little upon this subject, if I had not been a minister myself.

You will suppose a mind disposed and employed like mine, when I lived in Africa, would not make accurate observations on the

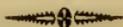
state of religion and morals among the natives. Some notice I could not avoid, and from my subsequent reflections on what I have met with there, I am confirmed in the justness of Mr. Halyburton's assertions. I will answer the substance of your several queries in the gross. The negroes in Guinea, in those parts with which I have been best acquainted, (and I have reason to believe the same of other parts) have some apprehension of invisible powers, of a Providence, and of a separate state. They among whom I lived, appeared to have nothing that could be called religion; but they are strongly addicted to necromancy, divination, amulets, and charms; strongly influenced in the notions of magic and witchcraft. They certainly in some degree are affected by the sense of moral and immoral; they know that truth and justice are right, and their opposites wrong; but it is a knowledge that has little more influence upon their practice than the like knowledge has upon many who are called Christians. I have known some of them terrified and afraid of being alone in the dark, after the commission of gross violence. But I do not know they have any idea of what we mean by the word *sin*, as a transgression of a law. Nor did I ever meet with the idea of communion with God as an ingredient of happiness. I believe they allow there is a supreme power; but I do not believe they either love him, worship him, or fear him. What apprehensions they have respect subordinate powers, and agents, who are capable of hurting them. In a word, I never perceived in them any trace of an awakened mind, or of any higher principle of their conduct than self. I am sorry to say, in answer to one of your queries, that the Europeans they have seen, instead of helping their conceptions, have generally heightened their evil dispositions, and taught them nothing but wickedness. I have frequently heard them when accused of dishonesty or falsehood, express their abhorrence of the charge, by saying, "Do you think I am a white man? or, do you think I am a Christian?" The Portuguese have indeed, on some parts of the coast, proselyted many of the natives to the name of Christian; but we generally are upon our guard against these, as the most deceitful, malicious, and revengeful of all the inhabitants. From the English they seldom hear any thing more of the name of God, or of Christ, except in a way of profane swearing, than of the name of Mahomet. I must now conclude, lest I

detain my letter another fortnight. Mrs. Newton tenders her sincere love and respects. We long to see you here. Pray for us. May the Lord bless you abundantly.

I am affectionately yours,

JOHN NEWTON.

Charles's Square, Hoxton, London, Feb. 23, 1781.



THE REV. JOHN NEWTON TO THE REV. WM. BARLASS.

Dear Sir,

HOW long, how often have I wished to write to you! How often upon the point of writing, yet still prevented! I cannot well either excuse or blame myself. I indeed waited a while for a letter from you, but when I heard you had begun one, and were disabled from finishing it, I considered the debt as paid, and that it was my turn to write again. I have been concerned for your illness, and more so (I think) to be informed that your spirits were affected. I need not tell you that you have overstudied; you know and feel it. I wish, if there be no material objection, and you are able to travel, that you would turn your face southward, and come to London. Change your air, use exercise, drop all study—only take a single text of Scripture or so in the morning to feed upon all day, and live a while free from care and labour. This prescription, if you can follow it, will, I hope, by the Lord's blessing, be of great advantage to your health, and I shall have the pleasure of your company for my fee.

I see you, however, in the Lord's hands, and believe your affliction, however grievous to the flesh, is his wise appointment for your good. To him, as your best friend and infallible physician, I commend you, and believe he will lay no more upon you than he will support you under, and that the event shall be to your advantage. I am short-sighted, and cannot distinctly tell why He is pleased to lay you aside, after he has given you a desire to serve him, qualified you for his service, and appointed you a place to serve him. But I know there must be a reason, whether I can assign it or not. I believe and hope his design is expressed by the apostle, 2 Cor. i. 3—11, He afflicts you, that he may comfort you, and that you may comfort others from your own experience of

his goodness. He afflicts you, that you may not trust in yourself, but in him that raiseth the dead. Likewise to engage the prayers of many for you, that the thanksgivings of many may afterward abound in your behalf. These things are tokens, not of anger, but of adoption; not for his pleasure, but for your profit, and to make you partaker of his holiness. Therefore faint not, though you are rebuked of him. But hope in his mercy, and you shall yet praise him. I hope, amongst other things, the necessity of the case will constrain you to seek to him for confidence to become an extempore preacher. For unless you are set free from the excessive burthens you formerly imposed upon yourself, I can hardly hope you will ever be long well. If you trust him, and honour him, by attempting to preach extempore, I am persuaded you will be more comfortable in yourself, and I think more useful and acceptable to others.

Last Wednesday Mr. Jarment was at my church, and he spoke to me after service, and I have had the pleasure of his company three hours this morning. I loved Mr. Culbert, but his modesty and my reserve did not quite suit. We often looked at each other and sat silent; for though my tongue will run apace when I am set a going, I compare myself to an old pump, into which you must first put water, if you mean to get any out of it. Mr. Jarment is more chatty, and helps my natural unreadiness. But then he lives at such a distance (about three miles) that I cannot expect he will come often to see me, and I am sure it will not be in my power to call often on him. However, I believe his visits, when we can meet, will be very pleasant to me.

While you are afflicted I am still favoured with health, and go through my business with as little inconvenience at London as formerly at Olney. Only I sometimes regret the want of that leisure I then enjoyed. But upon the whole, I have much reason to be pleased with my new situation, and thankful for it. Alas, there is the rub, the want of gratitude and sensibility is my continual shame and burden. But I serve a gracious Master, who mercifully bears with that in me, which I can hardly bear with in myself, and renews his pardon, and his goodness to me, day by day. Mrs. Newton likewise is favoured with a very tolerable share of health.

I cannot well write so much as usual, while I have nothing from you to answer. I love you dearly, and hope I shall be thankful to

hear of your recovery. Write when you are able, and in the mean time continue to pray for me. We may, in this way, be present to each other in spirit as often as we please. The throne of grace is the central point, in which all the Lord's children meet. And this is equally near to us all. The people at London, and at Aberdeen, see by the light of the same sun; and believers in all places see by the light of the same Sun of Righteousness. The Head of the church triumphant does not confine himself to those who are already before the throne. He is likewise always present with every member of the church militant. And he humbles himself to notice the worship of heaven: he stoops lower still, even to take notice of ours. And ere long these different branches of his family shall join, and praise, love, and adore him without interruption, and without end.

I hear Mr. More is upon the point of settling at Shields, which I am glad of, as he seemed discouraged for want of a settlement. I told him, that when the Lord's time came, the proper place would be pointed out, though not by a voice from heaven, yet with equal certainty, by the openings and leadings of his providence.

And now I bid you farewell for the present; we join in love to you, and should be heartily glad to see you here. Believe me to be always,

Your affectionate friend and servant,

JOHN NEWTON.

Hoxton, London, October 13, 1781.



THE REV. JOHN NEWTON TO THE REV. WM. BARLASS.

My dear Sir,

YOUR letter was welcome, and read with the feelings of a friend, therefore I am willing to write immediately; but if I do, it must be more briefly than I wish. Immoderate application has hurt your nervous system. This has been the *cause* of your illness, and the *occasion* of your dark apprehensions and temptations. But the Lord is with you, he has supported you, begun to restore you, and I hope will give you some measure of strength for his service. But possibly you may go a little halting the rest of your journey. But

all shall be sanctified. You are in that school in which his ministers acquire the tongue of the learned, and you will not suffer in vain. Others will be benefited, and will praise God for you. 2 Cor. i. 3—11.

Your thoughts of forsaking the ministry may perplex you, but they shall not prevail. You have neither *right*, nor *will*, nor *power* to do it. I think you did not article with the Lord that you would serve him provided he would give you health and comfort, and every thing to your own mind, but not otherwise. What! a soldier of Jesus Christ think of deserting the service because he meets with some hardships? It is not your own thought; the enemy, who would gladly see you throw down your arms and run, takes advantage of your low spirits to force it upon you! You ask my advice; I say you have need of courage, and you have need of patience. I know when trials are long continued they grow more irksome—but we have no right to limit the Lord, or to say if a trial continues above so many weeks or months, it cannot be a token of love, nor designed for my good; it must be a whip or a rod to drive me out of his service. I would no more advise you to give up the ministry, than to renounce your Christian profession. But then I wish you to leave all in the Lord's hands. You have set your hand to the plough, and are not to look back. You are a minister, and must necessarily be so. Though it is not necessary that you should be always well, and strong, and able, it is necessary that you be fixed and faithful in your desire and intention. But it is not necessary that you should be *useful* in the common sense of the word. You know you were useful when well, and for aught you know you have been more useful while sick. Some wise and great design may be promoting by your sickness. You are observed not only by men, but invisible powers are looking on, 1 Cor. iv. 9. And you know not how far the glory of the Lord may be concerned in your trials and supports. It is good to desire usefulness, yet self is very apt to creep in here. There are two ways of being subservient to the Lord's will, by doing and by suffering; the former is more pleasant, but the latter is the best proof of grace, because in this self has least to feed upon. We are not our own. May the Lord free us from a wish of being at our own disposal, and more content to be any thing or nothing—to be laid by, neglected, if such be his pleasure, and only solicitous that self may be mortified, and his wise and holy will take place. I

trust he will again set you upon your legs, and open your mouth, and cause you and others to say, He has done all things well. At any rate he will do *you* good. He often moves in a mysterious way ; but he has wise reasons for all his appointments. Believe, wait, and pray, and endeavour to shake off all thoughts of declining your post as a minister with abhorrence.

I see that if you preach at all, you will in due time be an extempore preacher. Be assured, this practice does not depend upon natural ability or great learning, when the heart is rightly disposed and the mind competently furnished with the knowledge of the truth, and the person really called of the Lord to preach the Gospel. I am very sure your abilities, of every kind, greatly exceed those of many who are called Methodist preachers amongst us, who yet do very well. It is true they are not all masters of logic, nor very accurate ; but I know some who speak sensibly, with power and unction, by whom the Lord binds up the broken-hearted and awakens the dead. The habit of preaching extempore is a gift, to be obtained by prayer and strengthened by exercise. The chief obstacles are unbelief, a regard to self, and a fear of man. I believe, my dear friend, if our minds were *duly* impressed with all the topics of the Gospel, it would be difficult to study a sermon. If I was sure that both I and all my auditory were to die and appear before God the moment I had finished my next sermon, how little should I attend to the minutiae of arrangement and style ? My heart would teach my mouth, my thoughts would be weighty, too big indeed for words fully to express, yet it is probable they would find the fittest words I was master of, waiting for employment. When you try you will have trepidations and variations. You will speak sometimes much better, and sometimes much worse, than you expect beforehand. You will often perceive your own insufficiency ; and now and then perhaps your hearers will perceive it likewise. But upon the whole you will get forward ; you will preach more pleasantly to yourself, and more acceptably to the spiritual and simple part of your hearers. You may sometimes put a sentence out of its proper place, and expose yourself to the notice of little nibbling critics, who make a man an offender for a word ; but this you will not greatly mind if you are successful in winning and edifying souls.

When I see you in London, we will talk over the Protestant association. It will hardly quit cost to write about it. It is not needful

that we should think alike upon all subjects, or that when we differ you should labour to accede to my sentiments. I am such an enemy to Popery, that I dislike it even when it appears in a Protestant form. And all parties of Protestants are in my view more or less infected with it. If I claim the liberty of seeing with my own eyes, I speak like a Protestant: if I expect other people to see with my eyes, or am ready to despise or punish them because they cannot or will not, I so far act in the spirit of Popery. I do not wish to see Popery prevail in England, but should the Lord so permit, I think it a judgment which we have well deserved. As a Christian and member of the kingdom which is not of this world, I know not that I am called to prevent the growth of Popery any other way, than by preaching the truth, by prayer, and by a Gospel conversation. As to what can be done by edicts and penalties, let the dead bury their dead, I leave it to the men of the world who can see no other walls or bulwarks for the security of the church of Christ, than such as they are able to build themselves. The Lord has sometimes called his true disciples to the honour of imprisonment and death for his sake. Flesh and blood is not very ambitious of this honour; and if by godly zeal, brotherly love, and a holy conversation, we may be able to engage him on our side, our privileges may be secured, and I shall be very glad. But I dare not look to any protection but his. I have nothing to do with an arm of flesh in this business. At present, I must own infidelity and contempt of God appear to me more terrible, more upon the increase, and more likely to be our ruin than Popery. If there was not a Papist in the kingdom, I should still be afraid that we are almost ripe for destruction. Most of our fears and contrivances respecting Popery, seem to spring from a love of ease, and a dread of the cross. How it may be in Scotland I know not; but I believe that the most of those who were very loud against Popery, had little more regard for the true Gospel than the Papists themselves. And though there were some good persons among them, it seemed to me that the majority of serious people were quiet in their tents, and more taken up with mourning over the general prevalence of sin, than with the liberty granted to the Papists.

I enclose an address to my parishioners, which I sent to every house. Two or three persons have thanked me for it—some I hear were rather offended, and some would not read it. But if the Lord is pleased to make it useful to one person, it will be worth the while.

One of my views is answered. I have discharged my conscience. I could not be easy without attempting to put a warning word in their way. It will stand as a testimony that I wished them well.

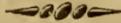
Mr. Jarment has been with me but once, I can hardly expect to see him again, except I should call upon him; and my foolish head has forgotten the name of the person with whom he lodges. I did not set it down when he told me, and could not recollect it afterward.

We still jog on comfortably—we have some trials, but our mercies are innumerable. The Lord affords me liberty and acceptance in my public work. A want of leisure is some inconvenience. I cannot write much, but hope I am not quite idle. Mrs. Newton joins me in love, and in a hope that we may yet see you some time in London, if our lives are prolonged. Such an interview would afford great pleasure to her, and to

Your affectionate friend and servant,

JOHN NEWTON.

Hoxton, Dec. 14, 1781.



THE REV. JOHN NEWTON TO THE REV. WM. BARLASS.

My dear Friend,

IF the gloom with which your bodily complaint overspreads your mind, should have led you to charge my delay to unkindness, I am sorry for it. But I will not plead guilty to such a charge. I wished to have written immediately; but so many *indispensables* have engaged me, that I could not answer sooner. In my present situation, it is morally impossible to write just when I please, and some letters from persons whom I dearly love was unanswered perhaps a whole twelvemonth.

How far the reasons you assign may make it necessary to resign your present charge I cannot judge. If you cannot yourself preach, your people must have supplies, and these will require expense. I hope the Lord will continue to make them both able and willing to bear this burden; and so far as your personal and private visits among them are interrupted, he can make up the deficiency by his own gracious communications. I still hope his blessing upon air and exercise, when the weather becomes favourable, will restore you to

the service you love. I pray that they, and especially you, may wait for him with patience. Your desire to lay out your whole time in their service, is from himself, and he will accept it according to the willing mind he has given you. But self is apt to mix with our best desires, and prompt us to suppose that nothing can go on well, if the plans which we form are straitened and interrupted. We can hardly be busy without thinking ourselves rather important; and then the Lord sometimes lays us aside for a season, to teach us that he can make shift to carry on his work without us. I see not but your sickness, like the apostle's imprisonment, which shut him out for public service, may prove rather to the furtherance than to the hindrance of the Gospel. You may yet live to see better days where you are at present placed. I hope you will. As to your dismissal, think not of it till your people propose and expect it, or till it is recommended to you by those who have a right to interfere. It should by no means originate from yourself. You may preach very effectually to all about you, by your patience and resignation to the will of God. It is easy to talk of these things from the pulpit; but the proof of the pilot is in the storm. I admire an expression I have met of Dr. Cotton Mather's to this purpose, "My usefulness was the last idol I was willing to part with, but the Lord has enabled me to give even this up. I am now content to be laid aside, overlooked, neglected, and forgotten—only let his wise and holy will be done."

But when you speak of giving up the ministry itself, I cannot well understand you. It sounds to me almost like giving up the Gospel profession. Have you not devoted yourself to his service? Did you not do this without any reserve? I am persuaded you did not make articles with him that you would be his servant provided he would give you good health, strong spirits, and all circumstances to your wishes; but if these were affected you would withdraw your shoulder from the yoke. In my view, the character of a minister of the Gospel, when sought and accepted upon right motives, and received by a public designation, is indelible; and we can no more part with it than we can part with our skins. It is not absolutely necessary that you should always be a pastor, but I think you must be a minister to the hour of your death. Would you have the world think or say, that you thought the Lord's service desirable, and therefore engaged in it; but upon trial it did not answer your expectations, and therefore you gave it up?

As to your fears that the Lord is provoked to reject your services; they arise from the advantage Satan takes of your low spirits. They are utterly groundless. You mistake in thinking you would terrify me if you were to open your heart to me on the subject of your provocations. I have a heart of my own which would at least equally astonish you, if it durst show itself. But what is it we preach? the law or the Gospel? You know the Lord has given you to love his truth, his cause, his service, and his people. You know you would willingly spend and be spent for his sake. How can you then indulge so hard a thought of him, as some parts of your letter seem to express. But indeed they are not your own thoughts; you know better. But among your other sins, and heart evils, you have a little of the root of unbelief remaining in your heart; and your present situation gives the enemy an opportunity of working upon your unbelief, and almost pushing you upon conclusions contrary to your better judgment. Do not give place to this enemy; resist him to the utmost of your power, and he will flee from you. Bring all your plans and wishes, and cast them, and yourself with them, at the Lord's feet, and there lie till he bid you rise. You have need of patience, and he has it in abundance to give you. Pray him to show you that absolute resignation to his will is the very summit of a Christian's character, and the great secret of possessing peace. Do not wish to die, (though you had the strongest assurance of heaven,) because life is burdensome to you. He is worthy for whom we suffer these things. He had power over his own life; yet, though it was very burdensome to him in Gethsemane and upon the cross, he would not give it up till he could say, It is finished. Time is short—and our sufferings—though flesh and sense make much ado about them, yet when measured by the standard of truth, and weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, are comparatively both light and transient.

I pity you, and feel for you in your trials, but I must not encourage your despondency.

My parishioners are much as formerly—very civil and polite to me: they give me no trouble; but not many of them are disposed to hear me, especially of the richer sort. I know not that they were angry with my address, nor do I know that it pleased them. I heard little or nothing about it either way. But it was a relief to my own mind. I could wish to be useful to the people who by law are obliged

to contribute to my support. And I have still hopes that some of them will one day know what pertains to their peace. But if they absent themselves from the church, their places are filled up by others. I have many hearers; and amongst them many who feed upon the truth in their hearts, and honour it in their practice. It was my mercy to be satisfied with Olney while I was there, but when I came to London I left many trials behind me. My prospects of usefulness are much greater here, and I cannot form an idea of a better situation. I could indeed like more time for retirement, and for writing to such friends as you, and more intercourse with rural scenes. But,

Nihil est ab omni parte beatum!

This is not only true, but it is reasonable, proper, and best. How else should faith and patience be exercised, and sin mortified. A situation in every respect pleasing would not well suit us while we are sinners. We are too apt to grow formal, careless, and worldly, as it is. If we had not *but*s and trials to rouse us, we should be much worse. There will be no afflictions, or even inconveniencies, in the land we are going to, because there they will not be needed. In the present life, these things are necessary, and therefore they are mercies, the fruits and tokens of our Lord's love.

I had a letter from Mr. More soon after his settlement at Shields, and he favoured me with a particular account of the exercises on the occasion. I received his letter a good while before yours, but I answer you first, because you are sick and dispirited.

I need not tell you that my sister Cunningham has been visited with a bereaving stroke, but he who inflicted it has supported her under it, and will support her. The Lord of hosts is her husband, and therefore, though a widow, she is not desolate. He has supported Mrs. Newton too. Oh! he is very gracious, and though for wise reasons he often causes grief, he will have compassion; for when he afflicts, it is not for his own pleasure, but for our profit, to make us partakers of his holiness.

Inclination would willingly send you another sheet; but leisure is so short, that if I attempted it, I should probably make you wait a week or two longer. Accept what I can in good part, and be assured of my cordial love, friendship, and sympathy. Almost my

whole time for letter-writing is confined to Saturday forenoon, and even then I am often interrupted.

My dear is pretty well—we join in love and best wishes. Mr. Jarment's son called on me soon after his arrival; and though Mr. Wilson does not live far from me, I have not yet been able to return his visit. I hope I shall soon. However, I desired him to come to me as often as he pleased.

May the Lord, the good Shepherd, comfort, guide, and bless you.

I am, sincerely,

Your very affectionate friend and servant,

JOHN NEWTON

May 18, 1782.



THE REV. JOHN NEWTON TO THE REV. WM. BARLASS.

March 21.

My dear Friend,

YOU say in yours, "I meet with so many indispensables that I have but little time for corresponding." The expression suits my circumstances so well, that I return it you, as the best and shortest apology I can make for my silence, which has been constrained, and not voluntary. Yet I did not think your letter had lain by me unanswered so long, till I looked at the date to-night. But, *truditur dies die*. When I had more leisure I rose early. Now rising early seems doubly needful; I have lost the habit, and indeed am so wearied with running about by day, that I am not well able to rise as formerly. I begin my letter with a memorable date; it is the anniversary of my great deliverance, when the Lord sent from on high, and saved me from sinking in the great waters. I have lived thirty-five years since, alas! to too little purpose. What multiplied proofs have I had in this space of a nature deeply depraved. What multiplied proofs and instances have I likewise had of the Lord's goodness to a chief sinner! I have seen many changes of situation since the year 1734, when I left off the sea-faring life—but my path from that time has been, upon the whole, comparatively smooth, and every principal change and turn in life has been apparently for the better. He has honoured me with

some usefulness ; and since my removal to London my sphere of service has been greatly enlarged, and very comfortable, only the effects of indwelling sin are a constant and humbling abatement. Ah ! how seldom am I in my study, what perhaps I appear to others to be when in the pulpit. Indeed, my friend, the lamentable inconsistencies I feel, now I know the Lord, ought to affect and abase me more than all the shocking abominations of my state of ignorance. For then I knew not what I did. But now light, and experience, and acknowledgments, and repeated surrenders, aggravate the evils which are interwoven with my frame. But by grace I I am what I am—it is of grace that my poor story is not much worse. The Lord is my keeper, therefore I am still preserved. I have not made shipwreck of my profession. He has not taken his word out of my mouth. It is still, I trust, the great desire and aim of my life to serve him : his work is still pleasant ; and I find no sensible abatement either of bodily or mental powers ; and he is still pleased to bear witness to the word of his grace from my unworthy lips. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ. In him I find peace in the midst of conflict, and power in the midst of extreme weakness.

I was glad to hear you had been enabled to do a little, and willing to take it as an earnest that he will, in due time, strengthen you to do more. I was glad that your necessity has had the good effect to make you sometimes an extempore preacher ; and I wish the assistance the Lord has given you on such occasions, may encourage you to trust him farther. I am persuaded you would not exceed the warrant his word of promise has given you, if you ventured to preach extempore always. I can well remember the time when I thought it morally impossible I should ever preach extempore ; and now, I find little more difficulty in preaching without notes than in conversing without notes. And so far as I can judge of myself, I seldom succeed better, than when hurry and engagements constrain me to speak without five minutes premeditation ; sometimes without being determined as to my text five minutes before I go into the pulpit. I hope I do not, I am sure I would not, make this liberty a cloak for indolence. I would wish to be always employed in a way suitable to my calling. But if I am properly employed other ways, it is no burden to me, when I have not time to study sermons. Not that I am wiser or better than I was for-

merly, or have more sufficiency in myself, but I am mercifully delivered (in the main) from the fear of sinking, and therefore I find it more easy to swim.

I am not acquainted at Mr. Wilson's house, therefore I only see Mr. Jarment when he calls on me, which is not very often. He seems a sensible and serious young man. As to his zeal, which you speak of, it does not stand in our way. He is modest enough, and I endeavour to guard against touching upon any points which might give zeal cause to be zealous. I wish I had more zeal myself, if I could regulate it and fix it to its proper objects. Oh, there are subjects and causes almost sufficient to make a stone speak. If I had a due sense of what is implied in the words sin and grace, of what passed at Golgotha, and of the states in the unseen world, surely I could not be the cold dull creature I now am? But when zeal spends itself about the less essential matters of forms and names, about points in which the wisest and the best have always differed, I would, if I could, lull it fast asleep. I there think it preposterous and hurtful, mistimed and misemployed. Like the industry of a man who should be busied and engrossed in painting and adorning his house when the house itself was on fire. Let the safety of the building be first consulted. Is it not strange, that when we profess to receive the New Testament as our rule, and to form our plans upon it, some of the plainest and most obvious precepts should be so generally overlooked? How plain is that in Rom. xv. 7. Now, how does Christ receive us? Does he wait till we are all exactly of a mind? Does he confine his regards, his grace, his presence, within the walls of a party? Is he the God of the Presbyterians, or the Independents only. Do not some amongst you, and some amongst us, know with equal certainty, that he has received them? Do not they, and do not we, know what it is to taste that he is gracious? Does he not smile upon your ordinances, and upon ours? Are not the fruits of true faith the same on both sides of the Tweed, and in every corner of the land? And shall zeal presume to come in with its ifs and its buts, and to build up walls of separation between those who are joined to the Lord by one Spirit, in direct contradiction to the tenor of the whole? Rom. xiv. And think it has a right to despise and censure, to judge and condemn, when it is expressly forbidden to interfere? see Rom. xiv. 3, 4, 10, 13. The Lord by his apostle says, Let every one be per-

sueded in his own mind. And how dares zeal say otherwise? Yet many true believers are so much under the spirit of self and prejudice, that they verily mean to do the Lord service, by substituting their own commands in the room of his. And they see no harm in saying, You must think and act as I do, subscribe my paper, and worship in my way, or else, though I hope the Lord has received you, I think it my duty to keep my distance from you. This assuming dictating spirit, appears to me to be Popery, though amongst us in a Protestant form; indeed the root and source from whence most of the Popish abominations have sprung. It is pretty much the same to me, whether the Scriptures are locked up from me or not, if I must read them with another person's eyes. I think we have all an equal right to judge for ourselves, and that we are no more bound to follow implicitly the sic volumus, sic jubemus, or the sic arbitramur of a bench of Bishops, or a board of Independents, or a General Assembly, than of a conclave of Cardinals. What an unexpected digression have I run into! I will not apologize for it, for I did not intend a word of this when I took up my pen; and now it is done, I cannot give you a better proof of my esteem and good opinion, than by sending it to you. It is a sign I do not think all Seceders are alike. Some people would think I talk like a Socinian. But I have nothing to do with those that are without: I think only of those who are awakened, enlightened, and taught of God, and are expressly warned not to call any man master upon earth. Had my providential call been clear, I think I could have joined with almost any party that hold the Head, provided they would have allowed me the peaceable exercise of my private judgment, and not expect me to fight for the peculiarities of the party, as though they were De Jure Divino. For as I claim a right of thinking for myself, my conscience obliges me to allow the same to others.

[*March 25.*] We expected Mrs. Cunningham in April, and hoped she would live with us. But now, we expect to hear of her death every day; for the last letters afford us no hope of her recovery. She buried her eldest daughter Susie about October, and is thought to have taken the consumption from her, by having been so continually with her in her illness. She has sent us her other child, who likewise has the symptoms of a consumption upon her. She was well a few weeks ago. Such is the uncertainty of human pro-

pects, and to such sudden changes are they liable. But we have two comforts—first, to know that afflictions spring not out of the dust, but they are appointed by Him who does all things well, and who is all-sufficient to make up every loss. And secondly, with respect to Mrs. Cunningham, we know that our loss will be her gain. Jesus is her Shepherd and Saviour, her sun and shield, she knows his name, and puts her trust in him. Even now he supports her, and enables her to look forward with comfort; and whenever she leaves this world she will be happy in and with him for ever. Therefore I trust we shall not sorrow as them that have no hope; nor complain, because the Lord has done it. Yet it will be a trial. For we were united, not only by the ties of a natural relation, but by a long and endeared friendship, and a participation in the same faith. We had proposed much pleasure in the thought of living together a few years upon earth; and still we may hope to meet and live together in a better world, where disappointment and separation shall not be known. Surely the Lord's design, by these dispensations, is to bring us more and more into the frame of the Psalmist, when he said, My soul, wait thou *only* upon God, for my expectation is from him. Cisterns must be broken, but the fountain of living waters is always full and always flowing. Gourds must wither, but the tree of life has shade and fruit sufficient for us all, and at all times. Creatures must die, but the Lord liveth. Creatures are like candles, while they burn they waste, and when they are extinguished, those who depend upon them are covered with darkness. But the Lord is a sun to his people, and his bright beams can well supply the want of the candle-light of creature comforts. In this world we must be often sorrowing, but we have cause likewise for rejoicing evermore. Mrs. Newton joins me in a tender of love to you, and in requesting your prayers, that our strength may be according to our day, and that if the Lord calls us to suffer, we may be enabled to suffer as Christians, and to glorify him, by a patient and cheerful acquiescence in his wise and holy will.

I could fill a sheet on the mournful subject you suggest, the profligacy and calamities of the times. The Lord's hand is lifted up, but few acknowledge it, or are affected by it. Our public affairs are dark at present, and likely, I think, to be darker. I cannot but rejoice to think that an end is put to the destructive war abroad;

but I dread the effects of our dissensions and confusions at home, especially when I see how profaneness, infidelity, and all the usual forerunners of national ruin abound and spread. We seem to have little more union, public spirit, or sense of the hand of God over us, than the Jews had just before the destruction of Jerusalem. And yet I hope we shall not be given up like them to utter ruin. For though the nation at large seems wicked and obstinate to an extreme, yet the Lord has a people amongst us, and I hope upon the increase. And though too many professors are far from adorning the Gospel they profess, yet there are a number, I hope a growing number, of excellent Christians, who sigh and mourn for the evils they cannot prevent, and are standing in the breach in the spirit of wrestling prayer. For the elect's sake, I hope, the days of trouble shall be shortened and moderated, and that we shall not be utterly forsaken.

Mr. Culbert wrote to me from Coupar soon after he left you, and it is but very lately that I could answer him. If you see him, or write to him, please to mention my love.

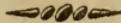
You will perceive that I have had this letter several days in hand. Inclination would lead me to take a second sheet, but I am afraid of lengthening the delay beyond all reasonable bounds, if I should attempt to enlarge. Mrs. Newton joins me in love. We wish your physicians or friends would send you to London, for there are few persons whom we love without having seen them, whom we should be more heartily glad to see than Mr. Barlass.

Remember us at the throne of grace, and let us hear from you when you can.

I am sincerely and affectionately yours,

JOHN NEWTON.

Hoxton, March 27, 1783.



THE REV. JOHN NEWTON TO THE REV. WM. BARLASS.

My dear Friend,

PECCAVI. I ought to have answered your last long ago. So it is, and I can make no other amends than by writing now. Perhaps, considering the terms of friendship between us, you

ought to have written a second time, to admonish me of my fault, and not have stood upon the formality of turn for turn. Since my removal to London I have been but a poor correspondent, and the causes which made me so still increase upon me, so that I hardly dare promise, or even hope, to be more punctual in future. But I wish you to believe, that, whether I can write or not, my affection and friendship suffer no abatement.

I am thankful that I can still consider you as in the land of the living, (as we rather improperly call the present state, which is indeed the land of the dying) and restored to some comfortable measure of health, and ability for your Lord's service. I trust you will derive many advantages from your long illness; and, amongst others, I hope it will in time, if it has not already, make you an extempore preacher. When you wrote your last letter, which is so long ago that I am ashamed to mention the date, it had already taught you to spare one half of your labour in composing your sermons, and perhaps that half you then employed, may, by this time, be reduced to a quarter. I shall have no objection to your continuing, as long as you please to draw up a scheme or skeleton of your discourse, with the principal heads, and divisions, and texts, but I should think all that is necessary may be written upon half a quarter of a sheet of paper. Not that I would give this advice to all: I could wish some, who attempt to preach extempore, would write the whole of their sermon. But you have been a student, you have a fund of preparatory knowledge, you have experience, and I think you have imagination. If you have a measure of a natural ability of utterance likewise, and really believe yourself lawfully called to the ministry, I am persuaded you want no further requisites to qualify you for an extempore preacher, than a more simple dependence upon the Lord, and a becoming indifference to the little feelings of self. Indeed, my friend, it is principally *self* that makes our duty difficult. We profess ourselves the servants and messengers of the Most High God; our message is of the utmost importance, both as to the subject and as to the event. Our hearers are dying sinners; it is highly probable, that every time we preach, there may be one or more present who will hear no more. Now, in such circumstances as these, to be anxious, not entirely, perhaps not chiefly, for the success of our message, but solicitously to feel for ourselves, what space we shall fill in

the opinion of our hearers, and whether they will judge favourably or otherwise of our abilities and address ; to indulge an emotion of self-applause at one time, if we think we have gone through our work *cleverly* ; and to be ashamed to look the people in the face at another time, not because we fear we have either suppressed or mistaken the *truth*, but merely because we may have given them a proof of what we profess to teach them, as a principle, that we have no sufficiency of our own—this is such an instance of depravity, and betrays such a shameful, criminal disingenuousness, that we may well wonder the Lord will ever permit us to make mention of his name any more. This undue regard to self is, I apprehend, the chief thing that makes extempore preaching so formidable to those who have a competent measure of knowledge and furniture for the work. Nor can we expect to be freed from it all at once, nor perfectly at the best ; but by earnest prayer, and by habit and exercise in preaching, we may hope, gradually to acquire more confidence in the Lord, and more indifference to the desire of pleasing men any further than for their edification. And though it becomes us to endeavour, by prayer and meditation beforehand, to make ourselves masters of our subject, and to study to show ourselves workmen that need not be ashamed, yet I am persuaded we should be most likely both to please and to profit our hearers, if we could speak to them, when in the pulpit, with the same simplicity as we do when out of it. As I have touched upon this subject before, I may, perhaps, now only offer you repetitions ; but you will excuse me. I trust, you can say of the Lord, *His I am, and him I serve*. Go forth, therefore, in his strength ; believe his promise to be with his servants ; put in your claim for that liberty with which I am persuaded it his pleasure to honour his faithful ministers who desire to put their trust in him, and you shall not be disappointed. I long to hear you an extempore preacher. You may study as much as you please, provided you do not hurt your health. And this method of preaching would give you more time for your studies, and more for your people.

I am not a proper judge of the question concerning patronage. I believe with you, that if blind people have the power of election, they are as likely to choose blind leaders for themselves, as the blind patrons are to choose such for them. What seems principally wanting, both in Scotland and in England, is a dispensation of the

Holy Spirit. Without this, I hardly see a pin to choose among all the different modes and forms of church government. With this, the one true church of Christ would flourish with us and with you, under all the different forms which obtain amongst those who hold the head. The parishes in England, where the people choose their ministers, are comparatively few. The most are appointed by patrons. But the great Head of the church has the supreme patronage. And Gospel ministers are here and there brought into both sorts of places. Even in Cambridge we have two faithful and able parochial ministers. The number of Gospel preachers in our church is greatly upon the increase; several valuable young men are ordained every quarter;—perhaps not fewer than twenty or thirty in a year. And now and then we hear of a minister awakened in his own parish, after a course of years spent without any regard to the souls of his people, or any skill to teach them. Some persons, who have taken pains to get the best information they can, think we have now more than three hundred Gospel preachers fixed in parishes—the most of them are either curates or lecturers; but we have a good number of beneficed clergymen among them, and in some places a considerable work. London is highly favoured. But though we have many good preachers, multitudes of hearers, and many excellent Christians, there is likewise abundance of light professors, and I think a general complaint, that the ordinances, though blessed to the edification of believers, are not signally owned to the conversion of sinners. I am still mercifully supported at St. Mary Woolnoth, and am very comfortable in my public ministry, and happy in many choice and valuable connexions.

At home, blessed be God, we are pretty well. Mrs. Newton has returns of indisposition, but not very frequent or violent. Our dear Eliza Cunningham came to us ill, and continues ill. She, however, eats and sleeps well, has not much pain, and is able to go out to church. Her physician prescribed sea-bathing; accordingly we spent the month of August at Lymington and Southampton, and he thinks her rather better for it. Her case, however, is still very dubious. If the Lord is pleased to restore her, we shall be thankful I hope, for she is a very desirable girl, and has, I think, nearly the same place in our hearts as she could have if she was our own. But I have endeavoured to resign her to His disposal who does all things well. And I trust, whether she lives or dies, she will be his.

Mr. Jarment undertakes the charge of this letter, and, if not inconvenient to him, I shall send a book with it, entitled *Apologia*. You will perceive it is not calculated for the meridian of Scotland, and therefore my only reason for sending it to you is, because it is mine. When will you come to London? We truly long to see you, and I could show you some people here whom I think you would like. Ask Mr. More, if he comes in your way, if he did not like some of my friends? I hope the Lord will lead you to us sometime. But if not, blessed be his name for the hope of meeting in a better world.

My dear joins with me in love to you.

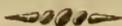
I am very sincerely,

Your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN NEWTON.

Will you please to give our love to Mr. Culbert, when opportunity offers. We have no occasion to trouble him in the way you hinted.

Hoxton, Nov. 4, 1784.



COPY.

Letter from Mr. Newton, Minister at ———, to the Right Hon. the Earl of Dartmouth.

MY case has been singular upon earth, and I think it will be almost so in heaven. If love is the essence of happiness, and if they to whom much has been forgiven shall love most, then, surely, (astonishing thought,) I shall be found among the foremost, and, if I may so speak, the first-rate spirit before the throne.

If great services and sufferings in the Lord's cause should be chiefly distinguished in the courts above, I may be thankful if I be admitted within the door; but if much forgiveness is the distinction, I shall have a claim above millions—I might venture to dispute precedence with Paul himself. I am the man who did many things against Jesus of Nazareth; not because I thought I ought, but because I was resolved I would. How often have I publicly and deliberately treated him as an impostor, compared him with Maho-

met, and given preference to the latter ! My mouth was an open sepulchre, and my life such, that I am persuaded the characters of many who died at the gallows would have been deemed amiable in comparison with mine. The Lord knows I do not exaggerate ; yet I was spared, pardoned, and, what is more wonderful, reserved to preach the faith which I had despised, and laboured to destroy. Thus I was in the dark and dreadful days of ignorance. Since the Lord was pleased to call me by his grace, he has wonderfully restrained and kept me in my outward path, so that I have not been suffered to make any considerable blot in the view of my fellow-creatures. Yet it is chiefly this latter period I shall refer to, that much has been forgiven me. Sins after conversion have an higher aggravation, from the higher love and experience, against which they are committed, which cannot be found in the worst actions of natural men ; and the heart, like the sea, has depths which no human plummet can fathom, and monsters which no eye but the eye of God can explore.

FINIS.

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