



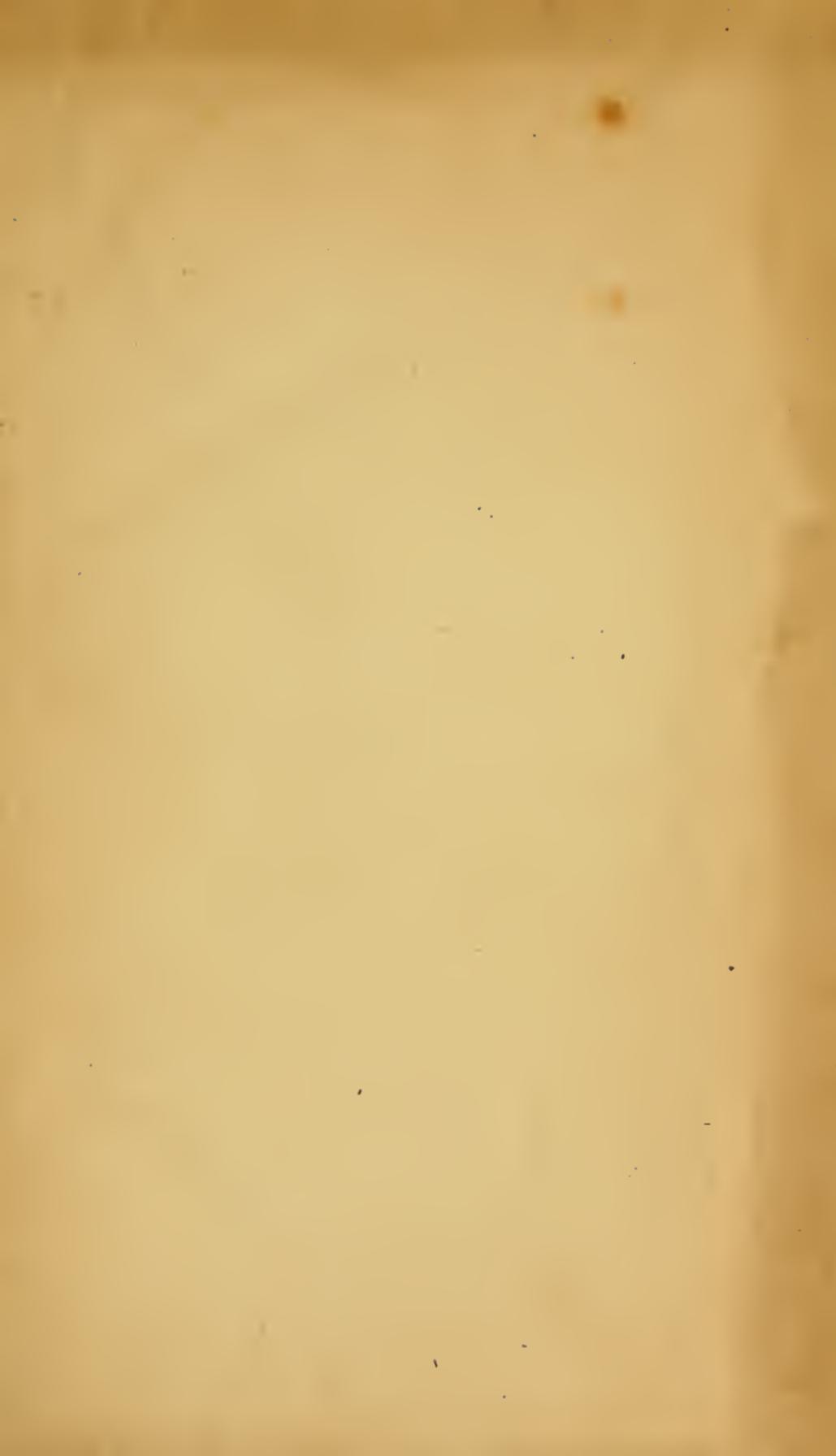
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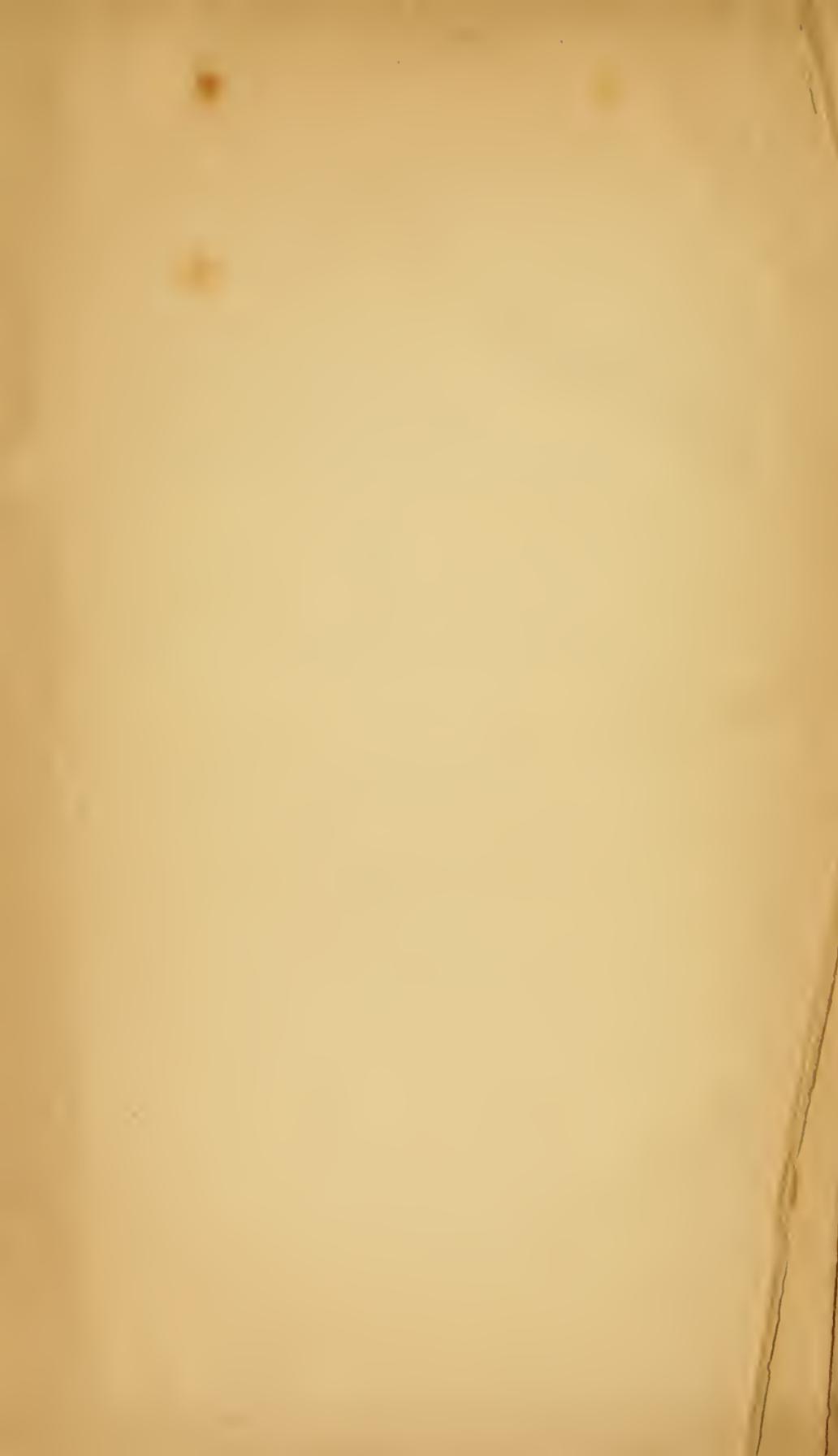
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S E R M O N S

ON

PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

BY

ROBERT WALKER,

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

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,  
A CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR,  
By HUGH BLAIR, D.D.

---

VOLUME THE FOURTH.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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**T**HIS additional posthumous volume, would have been given to the Public long ere now, had it not been for a circumstance which the Editor considers it necessary to explain.

When the third volume was put to press, soon after the Author's death, there were several circumstances in the Editor's situation, which prevented him from making a thorough search into the manuscripts of the Deceased. That volume, therefore, consists of such

Discourses as he, with the assistance of a respectable friend, could select from a general inspection of them. But, about eighteen months ago, the Editor, in arranging some papers, found a list, in the Author's own hand-writing, of Sermons designed by him for the contents of a third volume. A few of these happened to be the same which had been fixed on in the selection referred to, and which will be found in the third volume. But there were still sixteen unpublished, which the Editor supposed would be sufficient to make a volume nearly of the size of the former ones. In this, however, he found himself somewhat mistaken, the Sermons being in general short. He was  
there-

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therefore obliged to add five more from the Author's other manuscripts; and that the Public may in no respect be kept in the dark, the Editor gives notice, that these additional Sermons are the first, and four last, in this volume.

CANONGATE, EDINBURGH,

March 8. 1796.



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# SERMON I.



I. CORINTHIANS, IV. 1, 2.

*Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.*

**T**HE just conception and faithful discharge of the reciprocal duties in society are the foundation both of private and public happiness. In this respect the church of Christ is not different from other communities among men. Although Christians acknowledge but one supreme Master, yet they are taught to acknowledge among themselves subordinate degrees of authority on the one hand, and of submission and respect on the other. The God whom we serve is a God of order, not a God of confusion; and he hath pointed out, both in his word and in his providence, the necessity of doing all things decently and in

good order. The text, and the occasion\* likewise, lead me to speak of the mutual regards and duties which ought to subsist between a minister of Christ, and the people committed to his charge: In doing which I shall, through divine assistance,

*1st*, Explain the account given us in the text, of the nature of our office as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. And,

*2dly*, Point out the corresponding obligations incumbent on Christians, with regard to those intrusted with this ministry.

The illustration of these particulars will tend to produce a just conception, and I trust, through the blessing of God, the faithful discharge of those important duties which you and I will henceforth owe to each other.

I am, *first*, to explain the account given in the text, of the nature of our office as ministers

\* Preached at the Author's admission at South Leith.

sters of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

And in order to have clear apprehensions of this subject, it will be necessary to look back to the origin of the office, and see wherein it differed, at its first appointment, from the circumstances in which it exists at present. I set out with observing, that the ministry of the word is in all essential points the same, ever since it was ordained as an employment. At the same time it is plain, that several circumstances attending it are considerably varied. The ordinary call to the office, which now takes place, is very different from the miraculous mission by which men were consecrated to it in former times. Their vocation was more immediate, more striking, attended with more ample powers, as well as more splendid effects. From their immediate inspiration, an authority was derived to their words to which none of us can justly pretend. They promised, and the blessings of time and eternity were conveyed with their words; they threatened, and vengeance from heaven followed without delay. Besides, the first teachers of the gospel enjoyed from their

divine Master the communication of his own powers over nature. "Having called the twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, and to heal all manner of sickness and disease." Accordingly, the whole history of their lives is one train of miracles, verifying the reality of these powers, and displaying the fulfilment of that splendid promise, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father." All these extraordinary powers have now ceased. The pastors of the Christian church, in these later ages, are neither possessed of the immediate inspiration, nor of the power of working miracles, enjoyed by the Apostles. They are now men in all respects like yourselves, to whom God hath conveyed, by the hands of other men, authority to preach the word, to dispense the sacraments, and to preside over the congregations in which his providence may place them. Here, then, is a very manifest difference, and an evident inferiority on our side. Still, however,

however, the original proposition stands true, that the office is in all essential points the same, as exercised both by them and us. For it is easy to conceive, that the superior prerogatives, which have been mentioned, vary some circumstances in the ministry only, but do not in any degree alter its nature. The essence of this sacred office, the foundations of the pastoral authority, remain unimpaired. The mission is one and the same by Jesus Christ to all his faithful servants in this employment. His promise is unalterable, "Behold I am with you always, even to the end of the world." From his holy hill, where he sits as King of Zion, he provides for the perpetuity of his church, "giving some Apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

This, then, is the origin of that sacred office which is still exercised among you. This is the source from which the authority is derived that is necessary for sustaining the character. It is this which constitutes our mis-

sion the same with that of the Apostles, and confers on the truths which we deliver the authority of the word of God. So that if the doctrines which we set forth are agreeable to the Scriptures, if the morality which we enforce is a conversation becoming the gospel, we are in all respects to be accounted of as “ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

But these titles, so ennobling to him who supports them, are not without very solemn considerations to correct the levity of confidence and self-applause. “It is required in “stewards,” saith the Apostle, “that a man “be found faithful.” What a variety of important duties are included in this requisition? When we speak of a faithful minister, we speak of the rare and happy union of ability and attention, of zeal and knowledge, of meekness and firmness, in the same character; for all these are necessary to sustain the office with propriety. And are these qualities to be attained with a slight degree of application? Is it a small demand on the conscience of a man, to give its testimony to his faithfulness, in such arduous and important respects? These  
con-

considerations may well give rise, to that emphatical question, “ Who is sufficient for these things ? ” especially when to all this, we take likewise into view the awful threatenings denounced against the unfaithful discharge of this office. “ Son of man, ” saith the Almighty, to each of us, as he said to his prophets of old, “ I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at 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. Wo be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves; should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock, neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more. ”

Thus have I endeavoured to set before you the nature of our office as ministers of Christ,

and stewards of the mysteries of God. No man can boast of a more honourable employment. At the same time, none can aspire to one that requires higher attention, involves more difficulty, or subjects to a more awful account.

But you are not to imagine, my brethren, that while such high obligations are laid on the ministers of the gospel, no duties are, on the other hand, required of you towards those who hold that station. “Let a man, saith the Apostle, so account of us as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.” The plain meaning of which exhortation is, that Christians are required to entertain sentiments corresponding to that relation in which they stand to those who labour among them in word and doctrine.

I. The same authority which lays such arduous obligations on your pastors, requires of you to entertain a spirit of equity and candour towards them. It is certainly but fair to judge of every person according to the character he assumes, and the pretensions with which he sets out. What these are on our part you have already heard. I have shewn those circumstances  
in

in which we acknowledge our inferiority to the first teachers of the gospel. I have pointed out those, also, in which we maintain our commision to be equal to theirs. The sum is this, that, on the one hand, we profess ourselves to be no more than ordinary, uninspired, fallible men, like yourselves; but at the same time contend, on the other hand, that we possess the same authority to preach the doctrines of revelation, and to dispense the ordinances of religion, which the most distinguished Apostle ever enjoyed. What we expect, then, of your equity and candour is, that you would judge of us on these grounds, and expect nothing from us but what is consistent with them. You may perhaps ask, In what respects there is any danger of your transgressing this rule? To which I answer, 1<sup>st</sup>, That this rule is transgressed, when you confine the respect to which the office itself is entitled, entirely to the personal qualities and accomplishments of mind bestowed on those who are invested with it. When I speak of personal qualities, I do not mean that you should understand me as referring to sanctity of conduct. You cannot make any demand on us on this head,

head, beyond what is just and incumbent. God forbid that any of us should incur the application of our Lord's saying as to the Scribes and Pharisees, "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses seat, all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works, for they say and do not." We acknowledge, that we ought to be ensamples to believers, not only in word, but in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. In this respect, therefore, your severest demands do us no injustice. But is there not a want of equity in withholding your respect from those who do not embellish this office with shining and superior endowments of mind? Is not this the very thing against which you are warned, when you are told that you have the treasure of the "gospel in earthen vessels, that the power and excellency may appear to be of God." Why should it be expected, then, that ministers should understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, even as the superior intelligences of Heaven, who stand before the throne of God? Why should you be dissatisfied, except we can employ all the most exquisite arts of oratory to soothe your ears,

ears, and amuse your imaginations? Where are you taught to expect this from us? These are not our pretensions; this is not the character we assume. For let not any man account of us as orators or declaimers, plausible and artificial discoursers, who have nothing in view beyond their own credit, and are eloquent and ingenious by profession. We profess a character, more humble, indeed, as to any personal importance we can assume from it; but, at the same time, infinitely more serious and weighty, even that of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. But,

*2dly*, This rule of equity and candour is transgressed in a still higher degree, when you expect of us to preach doctrines accommodated to your passions, or to refrain from delivering those truths which are unacceptable or alarming. You complain, perhaps, that we disturb your repose, and interrupt your pleasing dreams of happiness; but this complaint is both unjust to us, and injurious to yourselves; and though at first sight it may seem levelled at us, is in truth levelled against God himself: For whose words, I beseech  
you,

you, are these, “ He that believeth not shall be damned.—If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.—Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” These, indeed, are alarming sentences; but you will keep it in mind that they were not devised by us. They are among those mysteries of God which are entrusted to us as stewards, and surely no less can be expected than that we should dispense them faithfully. God hath assured us, that “ if we do not speak to warn the wicked from the evil of his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood he will require at our hands.” Would you then in good earnest desire that we should forfeit our own souls, and incur the wrath of Almighty God, from a false tenderness to your delusive peace. No, my brethren, this cannot be done; or if it be done, eternal woe will be our portion, eternal reproaches will pass between us. I had rather hear from one in the spirit of Ahab, “ Feed him with the bread and water of affliction;” or from one in the spirit of Amaziah, “ Forbear, why shouldst thou be smitten,” than to hear from my own conscience, Thou hast betrayed souls to damnation; than to hear from

from an incensed God, “ Their blood will I require at thine hands ;” than to hear from the Chief Shepherd, when he shall appear, “ Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.” Let a man, therefore, so account of us in the spirit of candour and equity, “ as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

II. Christians, you are required to entertain a just esteem for the office and character which we bear. I am aware how delicate a subject it is to talk of that estimation which we claim from you on this account. I am sensible that our highest glory consists in our humility, and our best dignity in stooping to be useful : “ For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake.” We claim no obsequious homage, we arrogate no dominion over your faith ; but we expect that no man should despise us ; we account our office venerable enough to entitle those to respect who do the duties of it with propriety. Indeed we have not diffidence enough to apprehend, in the least degree, that such respect will be denied,

denied, where the proper virtues of our station appear in our conduct; and we know it to be both vain and absurd to expect it on any other terms.

Leaving, therefore, a theme, which cannot be pursued long to advantage, we are still more desirous,

III. That you would make a proper improvement of the truths which we deliver. Take heed then, brethren, how ye hear. The time is coming when we must all meet before the judgment seat of God, to give an account of the advantages which we have enjoyed, and of the manner in which we have improved them. In what way this decisive trial shall be conducted cannot be certainly known in the present time. We are told in general, that the great Shepherd, who shall then sit in judgment, will separate the sheep from the goats, placing the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. But besides this grand division, it seems probable, from the analogy both of reason and Scripture, that those who were members of the same Christian society, and enjoyed the same ordinances and means of grace, shall then be brought together and

con-

confronted, that the evidence upon which the different sentences shall proceed may be the more unexceptionable and convincing to all. The impenitent sinner shall then have nothing to plead in his own defence, when it shall appear that many of those with whom he lived have been converted and saved by these very means which he neglected and abused. It will be impossible for him to plead any singularity in his own case, when he shall behold some of those persons crowned with glory, whom he remembers to have seen in the same church he frequented, receiving the same ordinances of religion which he did, and who, perhaps, in many outward respects, had fewer advantages for salvation than himself. This, my brethren, is a very solemn consideration, and, if duly attended to, can hardly fail to have a powerful influence on our minds. We who are entrusted with the care of your souls, shall then be called to give an account of our stewardship. But you, too, my dear friends, must then appear with us, and as we must declare the message we have delivered, so you must answer for the reception you gave it. Wo will be unto us if we did

did not preach the gospel ; and if we did, we will be to you if you did not receive it. In these views, it is no slight or transient relation which was solemnised so lately in this place : And happy indeed will it be, if the same sentence of the Judge shall acquit us both at the great day.

In the mean time, remember and lay it to heart, that my task is not to please or to amuse you, but to dispense to you the word of life, which is able to save your souls.

Many, I doubt not, will come to this as to other churches, merely to sit in judgment as critics of the speaker's abilities. But I hope God will save us from an undue respect to any of you in this capacity.

I hope he will save you from that disdainful nicety which scorns to be instructed with plain exhortations. A professed declaimer may justly be censured if he fails to entertain his audience. For this purpose it is his part to make what excursions he pleaseth into the regions of imagination. But we have a dispensation committed to us, a form of sound words, from which we must not depart ; a doctrine which we must deliver with uncorruptness,

ruptness, with gravity, with sincerity. Permit us, therefore, to aim only at the praise of faithfulness, wishing indeed to please you, but at the same time to please you only to edification.

Brethren, pray for us, that we may be found faithful. Pray for yourselves, that ye may be able to suffer the word of exhortation, and to profit thereby. And may the great Master of the vineyard watch over us with a propitious care, to direct our labours, and in you to give the increase of fruit unto holiness, and in the end everlasting life. Amen.

## S E R M O N II.

ROMANS, vi. 12. 13.

*Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof: neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

**T**HE Apostle had, in the preceding part of the Epistle, opened at great length that fundamental doctrine of our holy religion, the justification of a sinner through faith in Jesus Christ. In the chapter from which the text is taken, he proceeds to guard the Christians to whom he wrote against those false conclusions which they might be in danger of inferring from this doctrine. And, that none might pretend to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, he shows, with great strength

Strength of evidence, that the truths which he had been stating so far from giving encouragement to a licentious life, on the contrary, laid peculiar obligations on all who embraced them to a strict and universal holiness. This he argues from the nature of Christian baptism, the initiating seal of the covenant of grace, showing, that, by this rite, we are solemnly engaged to die unto sin and live unto righteousness, in conformity to Christ's death and resurrection, signified in that ordinance. Afterwards he goes on to dissuade them from giving indulgence to sin in any kind or degree, and to enforce the obligations to universal purity by a variety of weighty arguments. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." Sin is said to *reign*, when it bears chief sway in the soul, and the person is wholly subject to its influence. The best and most sanctified Christian on earth hath still some remainder of corruption abiding in him : For perfection doth not belong to the present state ; and he that saith he hath no sin, deceiveth himself, and the truth is not in him. The Apostle therefore expresth himself in this qualified man-

ner. Let not sin *reign* in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Beware of giving way to your sensual appetites, otherwise you forfeit all the comfort of the doctrine which I have been teaching, and must be concluded strangers to that grace of God, which effectually teacheth those who are partakers of it, to “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the world.”

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof: neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; ‘But yield yourselves unto God.’ It is this last exhortation which I propose to make the subject of the present discourse; and I intend, in the

*First* place, To explain what is implied in yielding ourselves unto God;

*2dly*, To offer some directions as to the right manner of performing this duty; and

*3dly*, To enforce the exhortation by some arguments.

I begin with explaining the duty itself.

And,

And, in general, it implies, that whatever we possess, all that we are, or have, or can do, should be consecrated to God, and devoted to his service and honour. The being which we have is derived from him; every blessing which we enjoy is the fruit of his bounty; every talent with which we are distinguished was freely bestowed by him. To him, therefore, they ought to be entirely surrendered, and in the advancement of his glory at all times employed. When we serve God with the best of our faculties, and with the most valuable of our possessions, What is the whole amount of our offering? Surely if ever self-complacent thoughts on this point might have been indulged, David might have indulged them, when he, and a willing people with him, offered unto the Lord of their most precious substance with a perfect heart. Yet hear how humbly he speaks of all the costly oblations which he had brought. "Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort; for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and

the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and the earth are thine; thine is the kingdom, and thou art exalted as head above all.

More particularly, we must yield to God our immortal souls, with all the intellectual powers which they possess. We must dedicate our understanding to the Father of Lights, to be illuminated by him with saving knowledge, to be employed in contemplating his nature and perfection; above all, to know Jesus, and him crucified, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. We must dedicate our will to that holy rule of resignation which David expressed, when he said, ‘Here I am, let the Lord do unto me what seemeth good in his fight;’ and which David’s Lord expressed in circumstances infinitely more trying: ‘Father, not my will, but thine be done.’ We must consecrate our memories to be treasures of divine truth, our affections to the pursuit of those things which are above, our senses to the salutary discipline of self-denial, and our members as instruments of holiness to God.

All our possessions and enjoyments must be devoted to God. Our wealth and power, our time and our faculties, nay life itself, which is the foundation of all our comforts, must be entirely resigned to him. Neither must we count death itself grievous, so that we finish our course with joy and true honour. We must yield ourselves to God in all capacities and relations wherein his Providence may have placed us, and improve the advantages of our different conditions in life for the advancement of his glory. Are we masters or servants, parents or children, pastors or people, rulers or subjects, let us, in all these relations, be devoted to God, and discharge the various duties which result from them with fidelity and zeal, that we may glorify our Father in heaven, who hath appointed to every man his proper work, and will at length demand an account of the manner in which we have performed it.

If it be inquired for what purposes we are thus to yield ourselves unto God, the following particulars will furnish the answer.

1<sup>st</sup>, We are to yield ourselves to God, to do whatsoever he commands; in all instances

of duty, to give a prompt and chearful obedience to his authority. It ought to be sufficient for us, in every case, to know what God hath pronounc'd to be an obligation, whatever the world or the flesh may have to say against it. This is the true way to keep our minds in a steady decisive frame. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" He who seeks to ascertain other points besides his duty, will find himself perplexed with perpetual difficulties. Embarrass'd with attending to distracting and opposite counsels, his conduct will neither be firm nor graceful; and, even when he does what is right, he will be unable to enjoy the satisfaction of it, conscious that he did it not in that simplicity and godly sincerity which alone can render our obedience acceptable. We are therefore to yield ourselves to God as our supreme Lawgiver, who hath an unquestionable title to the service of all our active powers, saying, with Samuel, 'Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth;' and with the Apostle Paul, 'Lord what wilt thou have me to do?'

*2dly*, We must yield ourselves to God not only to do but to suffer his will. The re-  
wards

wards of active obedience are not found in the present life ; on the contrary, the most faithful servants of God are often visited with the severest dispensations of Providence. We must therefore not only have our loins girt about for chearful obedience, but our minds prepared also for patient suffering. We must be ready to resign our most valuable possessions, and our dearest comforts, the moment that they are reclaimed by him who at first bestowed them, saying, with Job, ‘ The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord ;’ and, with David, ‘ I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that in very faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.’

We are already in the hand of God, by our essential dependence, as the clay is in the hands of the potter ; let us likewise be so by our own consent and choice. This is the true balm of life. It is this that softens adversity, and alleviates the load of sorrow. In this we unite the noblest duty which we can perform, and the most precious benefit which we can reap. What wisdom can compare with the wisdom of resignation, which not only softens inevitable evils, but turns them  
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into real and permanent good; which not only soothes the sense of suffering, but secures a happy and a glorious reward.

*3dly*, We must yield ourselves to God, to be disposed of by his providence, as to our lot and condition in the world. ‘He hath made of one blood all that dwell upon the face of the earth.’ He hath fixed the precise issues of life and death, and hath appointed where we shall dwell, and what station we shall occupy in the world. To one he saith, Be thou a king; and to another, Be thou a beggar. All these things come forth of the Lord of Hosts; and in his will we must cheerfully acquiesce, with a firm and meek resolution to be disposed of as he sees meet, and to glorify him in the place and station which he hath assigned us; to serve him cheerfully, while he hath service for us to perform in this world; and at last to resign our souls into his hands, when he shall require them.

*4thly*, As we must be resigned to the will of God with respect to our outward lot, so we must be satisfied with his disposal, as to the measure of spiritual gifts which he is pleased

pleased to bestow on us. Should he make us but as the foot, we must be as well contented as if he had made us the hand or the head, and rejoice that we are found qualified for being even the least honourable member in Christ's mystical body. We must not envy our brother for being wiser or better than we, more than for being richer or nobler. And though we may covet earnestly the best gifts, yet if, in the use of appointed means, we cannot attain to them, we ought, with resignation to the Father of Lights, to make a diligent and faithful use of what God hath given us, trusting that they who have been good stewards over a little, shall not fail to receive their proportioned reward in the day of retribution. Every vessel of honour hath not indeed the same capacity; but every vessel of honour shall be completely filled. None shall have a mean station in the heavenly temple, although some shall be more gloriously distinguished than others. They shall all be kings and priests unto God, and mansions shall not be wanting to accommodate every class of guests in the New Jerusalem.

I proceed now to give you some directions as to the manner in which we ought to perform this duty, of yielding ourselves unto God.

I. Before we can perform this duty in an acceptable manner, it is necessary that we have just views both of God and of ourselves. In a particular manner, we must have a deep sense both of our original apostacy, and of the actual transgressions with which we are chargeable. We must yield ourselves to God like condemned rebels, who cast themselves on the mercy of their sovereign. Yet while we are sensible of our miserable and condemned state, we must also have a view of those riches of mercy which are open to the chief of sinners. We are to remember, with faith and gratitude, that God so loved the world, as to send his only begotten Son, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might have life: That he only is the way, the truth, and the life: That he is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him: That in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and that he is made of God, to all that believe on him, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. The  
know-

knowledge of these fundamental truths must influence the surrender which we make of ourselves to God, that it may be an act of our understanding, accompanied both with humility and with hope. But,

II. We must yield ourselves unto God, with serious, attentive, and awakened minds. It is seldom that any permanent good is obtained in consequence of a hasty choice. Even when the object of our choice is just and valuable, our esteem of it is apt to decline, if it has been embraced at first with too rash and violent an affection. In proportion as the charms of novelty fade, our attachment to it subsides, and indifference or aversion succeed to the eagerness of a prompt and hasty passion. If, therefore, we would prove stedfast and faithful, we must not be precipitate, but weigh every circumstance with care, and ponder well ere we fix our choice. We must remember, that yielding ourselves to God, will involve in it the renouncing of many favourite engagements, the performing of many difficult duties, and the mortifying of many desires, which hitherto, perhaps, it has been the whole plan of our lives to gratify. Let us, therefore, represent to ourselves  
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the probable consequences, before we embark in so important and solemn a transaction. Consider the self-reproach, the censures of others, and, above all, the displeasure of God, which you must incur, if you retract from such a deep engagement. God doth not wish to ensnare you into his service. He does not allure you by flattering prospects of ease. He does not conceal from you the hardships which you must endure. It is plainly, therefore, his will, that ye should consider these things, and that before ye devote yourselves to him, ye should count the cost, and see whether ye are able to fulfil the engagement.

*3dly,* In yielding ourselves unto God, our hearts must be humbled with serious and deep repentance, for having so long gone astray from him and his service. We ought to imitate the example of those penitents mentioned in the 50th chap. of Jeremiah, ver. 4. ‘ In those  
 ‘ days, and in that time saith the Lord, the  
 ‘ children of Israel shall come, they and the  
 ‘ children of Judah together, going and weep-  
 ‘ ing, they shall go and seek the Lord their  
 ‘ God. They shall ask the way to Zion  
 ‘ with their faces thitherward, saying, Come  
 ‘ and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a  
 ‘ per-

‘ perpetual covenant that shall never be forgotten.’ God will not accept of us, unless we be truly weary of our burden, and sensible of our absolute need of a Saviour. To such the calls of the gospel are peculiarly addressed; ‘ Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.—For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.’

*4thly*, We must yield ourselves unto God without any secret reserve or limitation, imploring that he may take the full possession of our hearts, and cast out of them whatever opposeth or exalteth itself against him. We ought to say to him, “ O Lord, our Lord, other lords have had dominion over us; but henceforth we will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.” He who hath only consistent pursuits, may follow them with a prospect of success; but a mind divided between contrary principles of action, can expect nothing but to be for ever drawn  
back-

backward and forward, as they happen alternately to prevail. In this view it is impossible to yield ourselves to God, if at the same time we yield ourselves to sin in any degree. Perhaps, indeed, we propose to dedicate ourselves to God in general, and only to spare ourselves the mortification of renouncing a few trifling indulgencies. But these indulgencies have unforeseen connections with others that are not trifling, and these again with more. Or supposing that they had not, yet the truth certainly is, that when we deliberately become unfaithful to our consciences in any one instance, we lose every firm ground on which we can withstand temptation in any other instance. We lose gradually both the power and the inclination to resist evil. God withdraws the good aids of his spirit, we decline from evil to worse, and our last state becomes worse than our first. Such only, therefore, as yield themselves wholly to God, and acknowledge after all that they are but unprofitable servants, entitled to acceptance only through the merits of a gracious Redeemer, have cause to hope well. All others build on the sand, but they on a rock. Their superstructure may be raised to the greatest height,

height, and stands both firm and graceful. God will pardon their unavoidable infirmities, and assist their endeavours. They will of course make continual progress, and, for every step of that progress, enjoy an increase of peace and joy here, and of unfading glory hereafter.

*5thly*, All this must be done with an explicit regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom alone we have access to the Father: 'For there is none other name given under heaven whereby we can be saved but the name of Jesus.' Without this Mediator, God could have no friendly intercourse with man. The weapons of our rebellion must be surrendered into his hands; for it is in him alone that God reconciles the world unto himself. It is by the blood of Jesus that we have boldness to enter into the holiest. We are accepted only in the beloved. The Father receives no offering but at the hand of this great High Priest.

Having thus explained the duty of yielding ourselves unto God, and shewn in what way it ought to be performed, what remains

but that I enforce the exhortation by some motives and arguments.

Need I to represent to you the necessity of this duty? Can you withdraw yourselves from being the property of God as his creatures? Can you evade the dispensations of his providence, or snatch from him those issues of life and death which are incontrollably in his hands? If so, then you may consult whether you should yield yourselves to him or not? But if your present and your eternal happiness depends on his favour; if you cannot secure an interest in his favour otherwise than by complying with this exhortation; if you must otherwise be left to struggle as you best can, with all the evils of life, and at last be banished his presence for ever, to spend a miserable eternity with reprobate spirits, What choice is left? Can you hesitate a moment to comply with what you cannot alter, and to surrender yourselves to him who will either glorify himself in you as vessels of mercy, or as vessels prepared for destruction?

Consider, in the 2<sup>d</sup> place, the reasonableness of this duty. This is the argument of the Apostle to the Romans; ‘ I beseech you  
‘ there-

therefore brethren by the mercies of God; that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.—And what can be so reasonable as to consecrate to God that being, those faculties, those possessions and enjoyments, which we derive from his bounty. If there is reasonableness in acknowledging our debts, and in being thankful for our benefits; if there is reasonableness in submitting to be guided by unerring wisdom, and to be disposed of by infinite goodness; in a word, if there be any thing superior in reasonableness to any other that reason requires, it is this, that we should yield ourselves to that God who made us, who preserves and hath redeemed us, and hath pledged his faithfulness to conduct all those to happiness who put their confidence in him. And this leads me to the last argument which I shall use for enforcing this exhortation, which is the advantage with which it will be attended. At the same time that we yield ourselves to God, he gives himself to us in all the fulness of his grace: For this is the tenor of his well order-

ed covenant; ' I will be your God, and ye ' shall be my people.' And what an infinite portion is this? If all the treasures of grace were open to our choice, Would it be possible for us to pitch on any blessing so rich and compendious as this, that God would accept of us as his property, and provide for us as he provides for his own? Surely, then, we cannot want any good thing. His wisdom can guide us through all the perplexing paths of life; his power can support us in every danger and difficulty; and his goodness is more than sufficient to bestow on us all things richly to enjoy.

I have only to add, that the exhortation in the text belongs in an especial manner to you who are as yet in early and vigorous years. Now your understandings are capable of the firmest impressions. Now your wills are most pliable. Now your affections are most patient of discipline. Now your bodies are most useful to your minds. Now your minds are most unfettered, and your whole man most susceptible of good impressions, and most capable of exerting them in action. Lose not, therefore, your irrecoverable advantage.

Answer

Answer now when God calls you with most affection. Offer yourselves while you are most worth the offering. Govern your appetites before the evil day come. Now you may gird them, and carry them whether you will; but if you neglect this precious season, they will hereafter gird you, and carry you whether you would not. An early virtue is the most worthy and valuable offering, honoured and blest with the kindest acceptance of God. But when a man shall look into himself, and find his faculties depraved and weakened, stained with the pollution, wearied with the service, sick with the disappointments, and darkened with the impostures of sin, how comfortless a task must he have in preparing an offering to God from among such a lame and diseased herd. ‘Remember  
‘ therefore now thy Creator in the days of  
‘ thy youth, ere the evil days come, and the  
‘ years draw nigh in which thou shalt say, I  
‘ have no pleasure in them.’ Amen.

## S E R M O N III.

LUKE, xviii. 19.

— *He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

**A**S man fell by *pride*, it is reasonable to conclude that he can only rise again by *humility*; and here we are taught that this is the express ordination and appointment of God; for thus saith the faithful and true Witness, ‘Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.’ I cannot therefore employ your time to better purpose, especially upon such an occasion as this\*, than in opening the nature of true humiliation, and endeavouring to illustrate the necessity and use of it, to prepare our hearts for those enriching communications both of mercy and grace which our Saviour, in this passage, encourageth us to expect.

I begin with opening the nature of true  
 humili-

\* Preached on a day of humiliation, before celebrating the Lord’s Supper.

humiliation. This takes its rise from spiritual discoveries of the evil of sin, as the transgression of a law which is holy, just, and good; as an act of outrageous and unprovoked rebellion against the mildest, as well as the most righteous administration; as the basest ingratitude to our kindest Benefactor, the Author of our being, and of all that we possess; and especially as it renders us unlike to him who is not only the standard but the source of perfection, and consequently incapable of any friendly correspondence with the Father of our spirits, the fountain of light, of life, and of joy.

These spiritual discoveries of the evil of sin, produce a fixed and solid apprehension of our own ill deserving because of it. We see the justice of the sentence which condemns us, and cannot help acknowledging that we are unworthy of the least of all God's mercies, and liable to that tremendous wrath which is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. Hence arise grief and shame, and all that inward distress which necessarily attend the consciousness of guilt, the present sense of for-

feited happiness, and the fearful prospect of that unknown misery which awaits transgressors in the world to come.

To all which must be added such a deep conviction of our utter inability to do any thing that can be effectual for our own recovery, as issues in a despair of relief from every other quarter but the free mercy of God, extended to sinners through Jesus Christ, and the effectual operation of his renewing grace. We are not truly humbled till we feel ourselves wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, equally destitute of righteousness and strength, incapable of making any satisfaction for past offences, and having no power of our own to rectify that fatal disorder in our frame, which is the bitter fruit of our apostacy from God.

Such was the state of the Publican's mind, who is presented to our view, in the foregoing parable, as an approved example for our imitation; whilst the Pharisee, who trusted in himself that he was righteous, standing apart from his fellow worshippers, as one who disdained to hold communion with them, boldly addressed the Divine Majesty, and, under the specious form of thanksgiving,  
poured

poured forth the pride and uncharitableness of his heart. The Publican, we are told, stood afar off; and, though his face was turned towards the mercy-seat, yet, conscious of his unworthiness, he would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, but finiting upon his breast, as the seat of his disease and pain, from whence he despaired of fetching any relief, he as it were flies from himself to the God of all grace, and gives vent to his penitent and humble hope, in these few but emphatical words, ‘ God be merciful to me a sinner.’ But the nature of true humiliation will more fully appear from the salutary purposes for which it is intended, which was the

*Second* thing I proposed to illustrate; and hence likewise we shall discover how necessary it is, in order to our regaining that happiness we have forfeited. And,

I. It is of use to disgrace and mortify carnal self, that usurping idol which sits on the throne of God, and reigns in the heart of every natural man. Herein lies the essence of

of man's apostacy. He is fallen from God to self. Dissatisfied with the rank which God had assigned him, he attempted to break loose from the Author of his being, and to seize upon knowledge, immortality, and happiness, without any dependence upon the hand that formed him. This, my brethren, is the original disease of our nature; in this consisteth the sinfulness and the misery of man. He loveth himself supremely; he liveth to himself ultimately; the genuine language of his heart is, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?'

He begins indeed to alter his tone, when conviction, like an armed man, forceth its way into his soul; then he feels his dependence, and wisheth to be at peace with that being whom he finds he is unable to resist. For this end he will part, at least for a season, with many of the members of the body of sin. Nay, so far as the external act extends, there are few duties perhaps which he will not consent to perform. But, when he is driven from the outworks, he only retires to the chief fortress of sin. Still self is worshipped in a different form; and, though he sees that it cannot

cannot possess the throne by violence, yet he hopes that it may be able to purchase it with a price. Thus the homage that was paid to sinful self, is only transferred to righteous self; and now the idol which was formerly black as hell, being white-washed, and decked with some forms of godliness, is permitted to wield the sceptre in peace, till either grace or vengeance wipe off the false colouring, and, stripping the deceiver of his gorgeous apparel, cast him down to the ground, and put a final period to his usurped domination.

Of all the parts of mortification, self-denial is by far the most painful and difficult; indeed all the rest are virtually contained in it. Were it only riches or honours, or even the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul, a carnal mind, stung with remorse, and terrified with the prospect of impending wrath, might be brought to part with them; but to part with his all, with his life, with his self, this indeed is a hard saying, and more than enough to make him go away sorrowful.

Now herein appeareth the end and the necessity of such humiliation as I endeavoured to describe. This layeth the whole load up-

on self, and breaketh the very heart of the old man; it setteth the house on fire, in which we both trusted and delighted, and maketh us not only to see, but to feel that it is time for us to abandon it, lest we be consumed. This then is the first office of humiliation, to hide pride from our eyes, by showing us that we are our own destroyers, and giving us such discoveries of our guilt and pollution, that we are made to abhor ourselves in dust and in ashes, and to cry out, with the Publican, God be merciful to us sinners. This leads me to mention a

*Second*, and more salutary end of humiliation, which indeed may be called its ultimate end, because the self-annihilation I have been speaking of, derives its chief importance from its tendency to promote it, and that is, True humiliation prepares the soul for the honourable reception of Christ and his grace.

I say, for the *honourable* reception of Christ; it is not meet that he should come into an unhumiliated heart; for, though his errand be to heal us, yet he must have the welcome that is due to a physician. He comes indeed to save us, but he comes at the same time to be  
honoured

honoured in our salvation. Though his grace be free, yet he will not expose it to contempt, but have the fulness and the freedom of it acknowledged and glorified. Faith, indeed, accepts the gift, but then it must be a humble faith, that is sensible of its worth; a thankful faith, that magnifieth the giver; and an obedient faith, that will practically improve the mercy bestowed. Christ hath no grace so free as to save those who neither feel their need of it, nor know its worth. Christ's benefits are not applied in the same way they were purchased. When he came to ransom us, he consented to be a sufferer; for then he bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows; the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, as the substitute and surety of guilty man: But when he comes, by his saving grace, into the soul, he will not then be entertained with contempt. He came in the flesh on purpose to be humbled; but, when he comes in the spirit, it is that he may be exalted. On the cross he was reputed a sinner, and bore the punishment that was due to sin; but, in the soul, he is the conqueror of sin, and comes to take possession of his own, and therefore must

must be treated according to his dignity. It was the hour and power of darkneſs while he ſuffered; but, when he enters into the heart by his quickening ſpirit, that is the hour of triumph, and the prevailing power of heavenly light; and, therefore, though in the fleſh he ſubmitted to contempt and reproach, yet he will not endure to be ſlighted in the ſoul. No; there he muſt be enthroned in our moſt reverend eſteem, and crowned with our higheſt gratitude and love. The croſs muſt there be the portion of his enemies. The crown and ſceptre which he purchaſed muſt be yielded to him; and every thought muſt be captivated to the obedience of his will.

This is the end of humiliation, to employ the ſoul for the fuller entertainment of the Lord that bought it; to prepare the way before him; to whip the buyers and ſellers out of the living temples of our hearts, that they may become holineſs to the Lord, a fit habitation for the King of Glory.

From this account of the nature and uſe of humiliation, you may be able to judge what meaſure of it is abſolutely neceſſary. It muſt

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at least go so deep as to undermine our pride, and bring us so low, that the blood of Christ, and the favour of God, shall become more precious in our esteem than all the riches, and honours, and pleasures of a present world. At the same time, we must beware of ascribing to our own humiliation any part of the office of Christ, or of the honour that is due to him. We must not think that we can recommend ourselves to the favour of God by the worth of our sorrows, though we should weep even tears of blood. It is not true humiliation, if it lead us not wholly beyond ourselves, to seek pardon and life from Christ alone; and therefore it would be a plain contradiction, if humiliation should assume the place of satisfaction and merit, or be in any degree relied upon instead of the Saviour, or so much as associated with him in procuring our salvation.

Hence likewise we learn, that humiliation becomes excessive, and counteracts its chief end, when it confines our attention so entirely to our own unworthiness, as to darken our views of gospel grace, and prevent or obstruct our application to Christ. But as few, comparatively

paratively speaking, err upon this side, I shall rather take occasion, from what has been said, to point out some of the symptoms of the opposite extreme, and then call upon those whose humiliation, upon trial, shall appear to be defective, to beg of God the blessing of a broken and contrite heart, which is the professed design of our assembling together this day.

*1<sup>st</sup>*, Then, they may certainly conclude that they are not sufficiently humbled, who suffer their hearts to be lifted up with their duties or attainments, and are not suitably affected with those imperfections and blemishes which necessarily cleave to their best performances. The true Christian grows downward in humility, in the same proportion that he abounds in the fruits of righteousness. The nearer he approaches to a holy God, the more clearly he discovers his own guilt and pollution. Thus holy Nehemiah, after he had been recounting, to the praise of divine grace, the many eminent services he had been enabled to do for the church, addresses to God this humble prayer, ‘O spare me, according to the greatness of thy mercy!’

2d, When you are apt to murmur and repine, because your duties are not accompanied with a present reward; when you are ready to say, in the language of the Jews of old, 'Wherefore have we fasted and prayed, and thou regardest not;' this is another symptom that secretly you entertain an opinion of some worthiness in yourselves; for, where nothing is due, there can be no right to complain when the favour is either delayed or refused.

3d, When you begin to think that any of Christ's sayings are hard, and to wish that his laws were less strict and extensive, and are hesitating whether you should yield to them or not; when you are unwilling to take up his cross, and to forsake all for the hopes of glory, but are set upon a thriving course in the world, and suffer your hearts to be overcharged with the cares of this life, and are cumbered about many things through your own choice, this shows that you are not yet sufficiently humbled, otherwise you would not stand thus trifling with Christ; and, if God have mercy upon you, he will bring you down, abase your earthly appetite, teach you

to know that one thing is needful, and constrain you to choose the better part.

*4th*, When you grow heartless and dull in the service of God, and relish no sweetness in the exercises of religion; when you begin to be indifferent about communion with God, and have little anxiety to know whether your services be accepted; when you can pray without looking after your prayers, and attend upon ordinances almost merely from custom, or to keep conscience quiet, without a real concern to find God in them, or to receive benefit from them; especially if you are so far indifferent about the spiritual consolation of the saints, that vain company, or amusing diversions, can make up for the want of them, and keep your minds easy and satisfied without them; it must be obvious to yourselves, that you need a sharper rod than you have ever yet felt, that you may be effectually taught to know your true home, and to take greater pleasure in the fellowship of your Father and brethren, than in strangers, and enemies to God and your own souls. Once more, in the

5th place, When, instead of feeding upon ordinances, and receiving them thankfully, you rather pick quarrels with them, and those that dispense them; when you cannot bear to have your faults laid open, but hate and revile the faithful reprovcr; when you grow censorious and uncharitable, like the Pharisee in the context, treating others with contempt, aggravating their failings, and extenuating their graces; especially when men begin to grow wanton in matters of religion, itching after novelties, and affecting singularity; when they think themselves fitter to teach than to learn, and that the church is not pure or good enough for their company; all this cries aloud for farther humiliation: And, when it shall please God to lead them into the chambers of imagery, and expose the hidden contents of them to their view, he will make them to stoop to the very persons whom once they slighted, and to judge themselves unworthy of the communion of those whom they formerly despised as unworthy of theirs.

These are a few marks by which I would have you to try yourselves; and, if you find that any of them are partly applicable to you;

or, if by any other means you can discover that pride and self-exaltation still retain too much power in your hearts, let me now beseech you to cry earnestly to God for that humble and contrite spirit which he expressly requires, and hath graciously promised to accept.

Grief, I know, is an unwelcome guest to nature; but grace can see reason to bid it welcome, as a necessary consequence of our past sins, and an essential preparative for our future recovery.

You will submit to the severest regimen, and take the most loathsome potions, for the health of your bodies; and, Should you not submit to the bitterest sorrows, and the keenest rebukes, for the saving of your souls. It is true, as I formerly observed, that your deepest humiliation merits nothing, and can make no amends to God for your sins; neither is it for any want of sufficiency in the blood of Christ that it is required; but it is part of the fruit of his blood upon your souls; for, if his blood do not melt and break your hearts, you have no part in him.

Consider

Consider whence you are coming, is it not from a state of enmity against God; and is it decent, is it ingenuous, to leave such a state, without lamenting that you staid in it so long.

Consider what sorrows they be, which these sorrows are intended to prevent, and what those are now suffering in hell who felt not this godly sorrow upon earth. Yours have hope, but theirs are sharpened with despair; yours are medicinal, but theirs are tormenting; yours are of short duration, but theirs are eternal. Grudge not then at the opening of a vein, when so many shall bleed at the heart for ever. Besides, who was it that brought you to the necessity of this sorrow? Who was it that sinned and laid in the fuel of after remorse? God did not do this. All the pain you can feel is of your own preparation. God only undoes what you have been doing.

Consider farther, that you have a wise and tender hearted physician, who perfectly knows what sorrow and grief are; for he himself was a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs, and is therefore disposed to pity them that are in sorrow. He delighteth not in your trouble, but in your cure and after consolation,

and therefore you may be assured that he will deal gently with you, and put no more bitterness into the cup than is necessary for your recovery. He was sent to heal the broken hearted, and he invites the labouring and heavy laden to come to him for rest. When he hath wounded you, he will bind up your wounds as tenderly as you can desire. He hath not, indeed, that blind fondness for you which you have for yourselves. He will not be so cruelly merciful as to save you from that sorrow which is necessary to save your souls from perdition; but at the same time he will not suffer you to taste one drop of vinegar and gall, nor to shed one tear but what tends to your future comfort and joy.

Remember that the more you are humbled after a godly sort, the sweeter will Christ and all his benefits be to you while you live. One taste of his healing love will make you bless those medicinal sorrows that prepared for it. Christ is not equally esteemed by all whom he will save; and would you not rather be yet more emptied of yourselves now, that hereafter you may be fuller of Christ and his grace; for our Saviour here assures us in the  
text,

text; that a thorough humiliation is a certain forerunner of future exaltation. “ Every one that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” When men propose to build high, they dig deeper for the foundation. Paul was laid exceeding low at his conversion, that he might be better fitted for the important services to which he had afterwards the honour to be called.

Let these considerations reconcile you to the humbling work of the spirit of God : And if any thing you have heard hath touched your hearts, seek not relief among foolish companions, but retire to your closets, and on your bended knees beseech the Lord to perfect the good work he hath begun, and he who comforteth those that are cast down, will not leave you in the Red Sea, but carry you safely through to the farther side, and put the song of Moses and of the Lamb into your mouths, ‘ giving you beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness.’ Amen.

## S E R M O N IV.

PSALM CXIX. 173, 174, 175.

*Let thine hand help me ; for I have chosen thy precepts. I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord ; and thy law is my delight. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee ; and let thy judgments help me.*

**T**HESSE words were immediately addressed to God, most High, whose workmanship we all are, even to him that quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things that be not as though they were. Here David appeals to the searcher of hearts, and lays before him not the product of his own labour and skill, as though he possessed something whereof he might glory before God ; but what he gratefully acknowledges to be the doing of the Lord ; a heart in some measure renewed after his image, and panting after a nearer and still more perfect resemblance.

I shall therefore consider this account, which, in the form of a solemn address to God, the Psalmist here gives of his own temper and conduct, as an approved model or pattern for our imitation. What this holy man was, that ought we to be; and such we shall certainly endeavour to be, if we aspire to the character whereby David was distinguished by the Supreme Judge himself, when he dignified him with the most honourable of all appellations, even that of the man after his own heart.

The passage contains,

I. The distinguishing character. And,

II. The leading requests of a truly godly man.

Each of these I shall briefly illustrate and improve; the one for the present trial, and the other for the future direction of those, who have this day \* made a public profession of their faith in Christ, over the sacred symbols of his broken body, and shed blood, in the holy sacrament of his supper.

I begin with the distinguishing character of a truly godly man; and you will observe the following

\* Preached after the celebration of the Lord's supper.

following particulars distinctly marked, viz. The matter of his choice—The object of his desires—And the source of his joy.

The godly man's choice—is the precepts of God. David had said, verse 3. That he had chosen the testimonies of God for his heritage; by which he probably meant the promises of that everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, to which he afterwards resorted in the immediate prospect of death, as all his salvation, and all his desire. These promises are indeed exceeding great and precious, suited to all the necessities of the saints, and extending to every blessing that can be denoted by these two significant and most comprehensive words, GRACE and GLORY. But one may choose, or rather covet, the heritage of a child, who hath an aversion to the duties that result from that relation: And therefore the choosing the *law* or *precepts* of God, for regulating the heart and life, is, of all others, the most discriminating character of a true child of God; for there can be no doubt, that one who sincerely devotes himself to the service of God, will most sincerely and ardently

ardently wish to be happy, in the possession of the promised inheritance.

Let us next attend to the object of the godly man's desire. 'I have longed,' saith David, 'for thy salvation:' a present salvation from the guilt and power of sin; and future salvation, in the full and everlasting enjoyment of God in heaven. David was already possessed of the first of these; for he spake from his own experience, when he said; 'Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.' He had the happiness to be a partaker both of pardoning mercy, and of sanctifying grace; yet still he longed for more of this salvation, that is, for a more assured faith of pardoning mercy, and larger measures of sanctifying grace. It is a just observation, with respect to earthly things, that NATURE is contented with a little, and GRACE with less. But it is quite the reverse as to spiritual things. Here grace is not contented with a little; on the contrary, it is insatiable; the more it hath received, the more it desires to receive. Enjoyment, instead of surfeiting,

furfeiting, fharpens the appetite. Nay, fo fweet is their relifh, that every renewed tafte of it, abates and quenches the thirft for other things. ‘ There be many that fay, who will ‘ fhew us any good ;’ this is the voice of the mere child of Adam. But what faith the new man in Chrift, ‘ One thing have I defired of the Lord, and that will I feek after. ‘ —As the hart panteth for the brooks of water, fo panteth my foul after thee, O God. ‘ —Whom have I in heaven but thee? and ‘ there is none upon earth that I defire befides thee.’

This leads us forward to the fource of the godly man’s joy. ‘ Thy law,’ faith David, ‘ is my delight.’ Here he chufes the term law for denoting the whole revelation of God’s will, to remind us of the infeparable connection between privilege and duty, faith and obedience, holinefs and comfort ; and to teach us, that we ought to be thankful to God, for the direction he hath given us in the road to heaven, no lefs than for the promifes by which we are affured of the poffeffion of it. But what I would chiefly obferve is, that the joy of a faint is not extracted from fuch bafe  
and

and perishing materials, as corn, and wine, and oil; it flows spontaneously from the fountain of living waters; from the pure source of that word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. Nay, so little is it dependent upon, or even connected with, any thing that belongs to a present world, that ‘ although the fig-tree should not blossom, neither should fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive should fail, and the fields should yield no meat; the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there should be no herd in the stall;’ yet still the saint can rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation. Nay when the heavens shall be shrivelled up like a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island shall be moved out of their places; he can look at the universal desolation, and say, when these materials are consumed, I shall have lost nothing. ‘ All things are mine, for I am Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.—God lives, blessed be my rock.—The Lord is the portion of my inheritance,’ and in him I possess and enjoy all things.

These

These three particulars, respecting the matter of the godly man's choice, the object of his desire, and the source of his joy, may help us to form a just estimate of ourselves; and this is the improvement I would have you to make of this branch of the subject.

How are your hearts affected towards the precepts of God's word? an outward reluctant obedience there may be, compelled by the slavish fear of wrath; but do you serve God from choice, with a free and liberal mind? Doth the Lord Jesus appear as amiable with the crown upon his head, and the sceptre in his hand, as when clad with his garments rolled in blood?

Is salvation, in all its extent, the chief object of your desire? even the present salvation of an inward growing light, and love, and purity; as well as the future salvation of deliverance from the fire that is not quenched, and the enjoyment of those positive pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore.

Do you know what it is to hunger and to thirst after righteousness? ' They that are af-  
' ter the flesh do mind the things of the flesh,  
' but

‘ but they that are after the spirit do mind  
‘ the things of the spirit.—If you be risen  
‘ with Christ, you will seek the things that  
‘ are above.’ ‘You will never think you have  
already attained, either are already perfect;  
but, forgetting the things that are behind,  
and reaching forth to those things which are  
before, you will press towards the mark for  
the prize of the high calling of God in Christ  
Jesus.

Once more, From whence do you derive  
your comfort and joy; from the wells of sal-  
vation, that issue forth from beneath the  
throne of God and the Lamb, or from the  
polluted streams that spring out of this foot-  
stool upon which we tread?

By this unerring touch-stone of God’s  
word, let us examine and prove ourselves;  
and if the Spirit bears witness with our spi-  
rits, that these lineaments of the new creature,  
though too much blended and marred with  
the features of the old man, are nevertheless  
legible on the fleshly tables of our hearts, let  
us give glory to God, who hath thus far  
formed us for himself, and trust that he who  
hath begun a good work in us, will carry it

on till it be perfected in the heavenly glory. And let the many blemishes we must unavoidably discover, while they humble us in the presence of a holy God, urge us forward, at the same time, to a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy for the pardon of past offences, and find grace to help us in every future time of need.

Having thus endeavoured to illustrate, and to improve for self examination, the distinguishing character of the godly man, as it lies before us in this passage, let us now attend, for our direction, to his leading requests.

*1<sup>st</sup>*, He prays for strengthening and upholding grace, ‘ Let thine hand help me.’

Dependence upon the Creator belongs to the essence of every creature. None of them subsist by themselves, neither do they possess any thing that they can claim as their property. The highest seraph that ministers before the throne, must adopt the language of the Apostle Paul, and say as he did, ‘ By the grace of God, I am what I am.’ We read of ‘ angels who kept not their first estate, but  
‘ left

‘ left their own habitation, being reserved in  
‘ everlasting chains under darknes, unto the  
‘ judgment of the great day.’ Adam, creat-  
ed after the image of God, and furnished  
with every advantage suited to his rank, sedu-  
ced by an apostate spirit, forfeited at once both  
his innocence and happiness, in consequence  
whereof all his posterity come into the world  
involved in the forfeiture he incurred, equal-  
ly destitute of righteousness and strength, ac-  
cording to that saying of the Apostle Paul,  
Romans, v. 6. ‘ When we were without  
‘ strength, in due time Christ died for the un-  
‘ godly.’ And though this weakness is in  
part removed by the renewing influences of  
the Spirit of God, yet there will always be  
need for that caution, ‘ Be not high minded,  
‘ but fear.’ Who can say, ‘ My mountain  
‘ standeth strong, I shall never be moved?’  
The most eminent saints have not only failed,  
but failed in those very graces for which they  
were most eminent, and that too by means of  
temptations far inferior to others which they  
were enabled to resist. The faith of Abraham,  
the patience of Job, the meekness of Moses,  
and the courage of Peter, were all found unequal

to the conflict, when left alone in the hour of trial. These examples are recorded for our admonition; and on each of them we may read the solemn warning, ‘ Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.’ Remember who it was that said, ‘ Without me ye can do nothing. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.’ Blessed be God for the assurance we have that help is laid for us upon one that is mighty; upon him let us lean in our journey through the wilderness; to his hand let us look for the help we need, and he will make his grace sufficient for us. Animated by this hope, the same Apostle who said in one place, ‘ I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing;’ in another place, setting his foot upon the neck of his enemies, utters the shout of victory, in those triumphant words, ‘ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.’ Let us go and do likewise. To the prayer for upholding grace, David adds,

*2dly*, A desire for quickening grace; for this I take to be the true import of the request,

quest, ' Let my soul live.' Sometimes, indeed, we find him praying for the life of the body, as when he says, ' O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more : ' But here the expression is too strong to be limited to a sense comparatively so low.

Life, or conscious existence, though a valuable gift in itself, is a gift we possess in common with the worst of our own kind, and with the meanest and most noxious of the inferior creatures. Nay, devils partake of it in a higher degree than man. Besides, the life of man, since the apostacy, is become short and precarious ; and though it holds true in general, that ' skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life ; ' yet the bitterness of affliction hath caused many to grow weary of it, insomuch that their souls have chosen strangling and death rather than life. But in all these respects, the life of the soul is entirely the reverse. It is not a privilege common to all, but the gift of special distinguishing love. It was purchased for condemned sinners by the blood of Christ ; and is produced in dead sinners by his renewing

Spirit: So far is it from being short and precarious, that its duration is eternal. It is a 'life hid with Christ in God; and because he lives, all who believe in him shall live also.' The longer it is enjoyed, also the more it is esteemed. Who was ever heard to say of spiritual life, 'I loathe it—I would not live always?' Nay, it is the life of the soul alone, that gives a relish to the life of the body, and enables the believer, under the heaviest pressure of affliction, either to 'possess it with thankfulness, or to resign it with joy.

This was the life for which David prayed; a confirmed sense of pardoning mercy, larger measures of sanctifying grace, communion with his God in a present world, and the full and everlasting enjoyment of him in heaven. The life for which he prays is no other than the salvation for which he longed. He had tasted of its sweetness, and he thirsted for more. 'Let my soul live,' saith he; to which he subjoins, 'and it shall praise thee.' From which words we learn, for our farther direction,

*3dly,* The ultimate end for which David was so earnest in his requests for help and  
life,

life, and the improvement he proposed to make of both. They were no doubt blessings that would greatly contribute to his own honour and comfort ; but every private and personal interest was in him subordinated to the glory of God. He prayed for upholding and quickening grace, that he might be better qualified for the service of his God, to whom he had devoted himself and his all. Thus he prays, Psalm li. ‘ Restore unto me the joy  
‘ of thy salvation, and uphold me by thy  
‘ free Spirit : Then will I teach transgressors  
‘ thy way, and sinners shall be converted un-  
‘ to thee. Lord open thou my lips, and my  
‘ mouth shall shew forth thy praise.’ And the principal reason for which he was desirous to obtain divine consolation appears from the use he intended to make of it, (verse 32<sup>d</sup> of this psalm), ‘ I will run the way of thy  
‘ commandments, when thou shalt enlarge  
‘ my heart.’

I shall therefore make this my concluding exhortation to you : By your solemn profession at the table of the Lord, you have publicly acknowledged that you are not your own, but bought with a price, in consequence

whereof you are strictly obliged to live not unto yourselves, but to him that bought you ; to glorify your Redeemer, both with your bodies and spirits, which are his. He says, concerning you, ‘ This people have I formed ; for myself, to shew forth my praise.’ He calls the world to take knowledge of you, as the persons by whom he expects to be honoured. ‘ Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people ; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.—I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love.—Adding to your faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ; and to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity’—abounding in all those fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God ; shining as lights in the midst of a perverse and a crooked

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ed generation ; holding forth the word of life. After this manner improve the help and life you have received, in your attendance upon this precious means of grace, ‘ Whatsoever  
‘ things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever  
‘ things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if  
‘ there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.—And let your  
‘ light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father  
‘ which is in Heaven.’ Amen.

## S E R M O N V.

JOHN, xvi. 26. 27.

*At that day ye shall ask in my name : And I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you ; for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.*

**T**HESSE words spake Jesus to support the drooping spirits of his disciples. We are told, in the 6th verse, ‘ that sorrow had filled their hearts.’ Although they did not fully understand the intimations he had given them of his approaching sufferings and death, although their warm affection for him made them slow to believe an event so contrary to their expectations and desires ; yet the manner in which he had been speaking to them for some time past, and the unusual tenderness which had of late appeared in his discourses to them, left them no room to doubt, that

that some fore and heavy trial was at hand. Jesus perceiving their grief, begins to tell them more plainly of his departure from them; but at the same time gives them such good reasons for it as could not fail to quiet their minds, and to convince them, that his leaving them, instead of being a disaster, was every way necessary for their best interests and happiness. 'It is expedient for you,' says he, in the 7th verse, 'that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.' As if he had said, The work given me to do is not yet finished; I must yet suffer more, before I can reign; but after my exaltation, to which my death is a previous and necessary step, I will send forth the Comforter, who shall fully supply my place, and make up to you for my bodily absence. What though you shall no more hear instruction from these lips, you shall have a teacher within you, even the Spirit of Truth, who shall guide you into all truth. Whilst I am yet with you, you have indeed ready access to me, for counsel and direction, in every case of hazard and perplexity; and perhaps

haps you fear that when I am taken from you, you shall want a friend to apply to; but know and rejoice, that I go to my Father who is greater than I, to him you shall have free access for my sake; and whatever ye shall ask in my name, he shall give it unto you. If I have befriended you so much in my present humble condition, what may you not expect from me, when I am exalted at my Father's right hand.

It is this last ground of comfort which our Saviour enlarges upon in the verses now under consideration; and the design of them is, to confirm his disciples in the belief of this, that whatever suitable prayer they shall offer up to the Father in his name, they may assuredly expect a gracious answer. The argument he uses for this purpose is very conclusive, and is no where else in Scripture, that I know of, expressed with the same degree of energy and force. 'I say not unto you that I will pray to the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you.' That is, My Father is so fully satisfied with my undertaking for the redemption of the world, and my sufferings and obedience are so meritorious and acceptable

able in his sight, that even though I were to conceal from you that I am to be your constant intercessor and advocate in Heaven, all of you who love me, and believe in me, have abundant reason to expect a favourable hearing from the Father himself; ‘ for the Father  
‘ himself loveth you, because ye have loved  
‘ me, and have believed that I came out from  
‘ God.’ And if the Father is already so much disposed to hear our prayers, how great must *their* encouragement be, and how strong *their* consolation, who know, besides, that their Redeemer liveth to enforce their requests; that he maketh intercession for them, according to the will of God; that his mediation must be always effectual; and that him the Father heareth always. These are joyful tidings indeed, and must make a strong impression on every one whose conscience testifies that he loves the Redeemer, and believes that he came out from God. The Father is fully reconciled to him; the Son constantly prays for him at the throne of Heaven; and what may he not then expect from the fulness of him who filleth all in all. But that we may have a more complete view of the comfort which  
this

this text presents to us, I shall separately consider,

I. The love of the Father.

II. The intercession of the Son.

III. The security which believers derive from them both, as inseparably united together.

I. Then, let us take a view of the love of God separately from the intercession of our blessed Redeemer. And, for our better conceiving of this, let us consider that remarkable declaration which we have, John, iii. 16. 17. ‘ God so loved the world, that he gave  
 ‘ his only begotten Son, that whosoever be-  
 ‘ lieveth in him should not perish, but have  
 ‘ everlasting life : For God sent not his Son  
 ‘ into the world to condemn the world, but  
 ‘ that the world through him might be saved.’  
 It was the Father who laid the plan of our redemption. It was he who sent his Son into the world, not in anger, but in love, that his poor lost creatures might be recovered and saved from that dreadful gulf of misery into which they had plunged themselves. Many  
 look

look upon the Father as an austere and rigid Being, who has no compassion, who delights in punishing, and even suffers a sort of violence in admitting Christ to be surety for sinners. But it appears from the fore-cited passage, that this is by no means the light in which the Scriptures represent him to us. No, goodness and mercy are the attributes in which he glories. 'God is love,' saith the Apostle. He is not only represented as accepting the offer when made by the Redeemer; but as being the first mover and spring. How does he rejoice that he has found out a ransom; what special delight does he express towards the Son, when employed in this favoured undertaking! 'This,' says he, by an audible voice, 'is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' He sent forth his angels from Heaven to proclaim the news of good will to men, to minister to the tempted Saviour, to strengthen him under his agony in the garden, and at last to conduct him in triumph to his own right hand. All these are unquestionable proofs of the Father's love: And if God so loved mankind,

kind,

kind, whilst they were enemies, how much more must he love them, when they become friends, when they comply with the terms which he has graciously established for their recovery, by loving and believing in him whom he hath sent? With what delight and complacency must he look upon them? He views us now as ransomed by the blood of his own equal. He looks upon us in the face of his Anointed; and whilst he does so, How warm and affectionate must his regard be? And, O what comfort arises to us from this! If our hearts do not condemn us, what confidence must we have towards such a God! When the sight of our distress, worthless and wicked as we were, moved him to find a Redeemer; Will he now reject us when we cry to him, and plead the merit of his own gift? ‘No, He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up to the death for us all, will certainly with him likewise freely give us all things.’ Thus the love of God, considered singly by itself, gives us the greatest ground of expectation from him, even though the intercession of Christ were less certainly revealed

revealed to us than it is. Let us now, in the

II. Place, take under our consideration the intercession of Christ, than which there is nothing more clearly held forth to us in sacred Scripture. He himself says to his disciples, in the 16th verse of the 14th chap. of this gospel, ‘ I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter.’ This is a special part of his office, as our great high priest, to intercede for his people, and his favouring ability is particularly concluded from this, ‘ That he ever liveth, to make intercession for us.’ Heb. vii. 25. Indeed we have both an example and proof of his intercession in the chapter following which is wholly employed in prayers for his people. Let us now make the supposition that the Father’s love was more doubtful; yea that there were even some ground to suspect that his affection was quite alienated from the children of men, yet, unless we were to suppose that he had likewise thrown aside all regard to his only begotten Son, we have still ground enough to conclude, that for his

his

HIS sake he will bestow whatever he asks upon those who love him and believe on him. When he presents that body in which he suffered so much—When he pleads the merit and sufficiency of that sacrifice which he offered up—When he urges the memory of the shame, the pain, and the cursed death he underwent, to satisfy the justice of God, and to magnify his law, how prevalent must his suit be? Can the Father turn a deaf ear to his beloved Son, whilst he enforces his plea with such powerful reasonings? Can he behold the prints of that bloody punishment which himself inflicted upon him, and be insensible of their merit?—Now that the most rigorous demands of stern justice are answered, will not mercy be awakened at the intreaty of such a suitor? It were absurd to think so. No, the Father's love to our Redeemer, nay, impartial justice itself, secures the success of the Saviour's intercession, though God were more averse to a reconciliation, than the most gloomy self-tormenting mind can conceive.

We have a famous story recorded of two brothers at Athens, which, as it serves to illustrate what I have been saying, I shall briefly

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ly relate it to you: One of them, for some high misdemeanour, was condemned to lose his life, and was going to be led to execution, when his brother, who had lost his hand in the defence of his country, and had been a great mean of gaining a victory which was of the last importance to the state, came suddenly into the court; and without saying a word, but barely holding up his mutilated arm, so prevailed with the judges by this remembrance of what he had formerly done, that they instantly discharged the delinquent brother, though he had forfeited his life. Thus far does the intercession of man prevail with men; and shall not the constant presentation of the Lamb that was slain, for so our Saviour's appearance in Heaven is described in the book of Revelations, shall not this be as operative and powerful with the loving Father? The Redeemer thus pleads, ' Behold  
 ' me, O my Father, Behold me in a form  
 ' thus different from that in which I origi-  
 ' nally was! Behold me now dwelling in  
 ' human flesh which I have assumed; and  
 ' how it was treated for the atonement of  
 ' thy justice, and the salvation of these my  
 VOL. IV. F ' people;

‘ people ; and now let not all my sufferings  
 ‘ be in vain, but for my sake receive them  
 ‘ into thy favour, and bestow upon them  
 ‘ those blessings which have cost me so much.’

Can any consider the force of this intercession, and yet doubt of its success? Let us, in the

III. Place, join both these together, viz. The assured love of the Father ; and, The constant prevailing intercession of the Son ; and, O how great is the amount ! Either of them singly give us good ground to hope ; but when the two are united, How certain, how infallible is our assurance ? When the advocate’s plea is just and fairly urged, when the judge is sufficiently qualified and perfectly well disposed, how safe is the client, how secure of success ? If God himself loves you, and the Redeemer never leaves importuning him for you, how is it possible that your prayers should be rejected, or any of your interests miscarry ? It is needless to insist any longer in the proof of this ; the conclusion is so strong and evident, that you must all of  
 you.

you have made it before I could speak it. I shall therefore suggest to you, in a few particulars, the natural use and improvement of this comfortable subject.

And now my dear brethren, upon the review of all that has been said, Is not this the secret language of your hearts: These, indeed are blessed news, but what interest have I in them? Does the comfort of them belong to me in particular or not? This is as it should be. In so far you are on the road to the best and most necessary improvement that I can suggest to you. The Scriptures will inform you, that this is the childrens bread, in which the dogs can pretend no share. You see it is not a common privilege. It is peculiar to those who love the Redeemer, 'and believe that he is come out from God.' This is the test.

Here, then, is the great and important question, which, in the name of the living God, the searcher of hearts, I put to every soul who now hears me. Is it your character, or is it not? I do not ask you, if you believe

the existence of a God; or even the truth of the Christian religion. This is a faith which may go down with you to Hell, where the devils themselves believe and tremble.

Neither do I ask you, If you have felt some passing motions of love to Christ; some faint desires after an interest in him. There is a desire of the slothful, says Solomon, that kills him, while it only serves to increase his present uneasiness, and his after punishment. But do you really know Christ, and love him in sincerity? Do you cordially approve of the methods of his saving grace? Do you know what it is to lay down your guilty souls, as under the effusion of his blood, and the covert of his righteousness? Do you know what it is to strip yourselves of pride and self-confidence in his sight, that your nakedness may be clothed with his most perfect righteousness? Do you know what it is to bow to his sceptre, as his obedient subjects; to take the law of your direction from his mouth, and to rejoice that you have such a governor or instructor? And do you feel the necessity of a constant application

cation to him as your great head, on whose influences you live, and by whose spirit you must be perpetually aided to all the purposes of a divine life? Can you say to him, as Peter did, ‘Thou Lord, who knowest all things, knowest that I love thee.’ Does this faith and love govern your practice, and appear in the fruits of holy and virtuous conversation? Have you, by these, been kept not only from the grosser habits of falsehood, drunkenness, swearing, uncleanness, and other rank sins; but is the very inclination to them mortified, and can you say that is your principal aim and study to maintain consciences void of offence both towards God and man? Do you know what it is to pray in the name of Christ; not barely to pronounce the words, as many do a spell, as if God were to be charmed by a sound; but with a humble sense of your own unworthiness, a firm persuasion of his infinite merit, and a hopeful expectation of being graciously heard for his sake?

These are the marks by which each of you may be known by himself.

And now that I have held up the mirror, I suppose, I may warrantably class this whole

audience into three different sorts of people.

*1<sup>st</sup>*, Those who are yet doubtful of their state, and know not what judgment to pass.

*2<sup>d</sup>*, Those who are sensible that the marks that I have given do not at all agree to them.

And,

*3<sup>d</sup>*, Those with whose spirits the Holy Spirit doth witness, that in truth they love the Redeemer, and believe that he came out from God. And this directs me to a three-fold address.

*1<sup>st</sup>*, As for you who are yet uncertain about your state, who have not accustomed yourselves to this strict reckoning, and therefore know not what judgment to form of yourselves, What have you been doing? How can you answer this neglect? Ah! shame upon you, to delay an inquiry upon which all the comfort and safety of your souls does depend. How inexcusable is this? If the Scriptures had told us that it was only some few that should miss salvation; yea if it had been said, that it was only one of ten thousand that was in danger of Hell fire, yet methinks the hazard is so dreadful, that each of

us should be crying out, ' Lord is it I.' But when the Spirit of God tells us, and the common course of the world must convince us, that comparatively there are few, very few, that shall be saved ! O, how solicitous should every one of us be to know whether we be of that happy number ; and how utterly inexcusable are they who neglect it. Well then, let the time past suffice. Speedily set about the most serious examination. Never be at rest till you have come to just a sentence on your case. The discovery will repay all the time and pains you can bestow upon it.

*2dly*, As for you who are past doubting in this matter, whose full blown sins testify to your foreheads that you cannot lay the most distant claim to the character in the text ; who neither love the Redeemer, nor believe to any saving purpose that he came out from God, How deplorable is your present case ! What ! Cannot self-love conceal your condition from you ? Has it no covering to throw over you ; no lurking place to hide you in ? O then bethink you, how open you must be to that God, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, penetrating into the innermost foldings of the

most deceitful heart, and marking him for a hypocrite who calls, yea thinks himself just? How does this discovery affect your souls? Canst thou dwell with devouring flames? Canst thou lie down in everlasting burnings? Canst thou bear the heavy hand of omnipotence upon thee without shrinking? or, if thou canst not, say, Hast thou the most distant hope that possibly thou mayest be saved, notwithstanding thy unbelief and wickedness? The issue of this matter is very short, and requires no great degree of penetration to perceive. If the gospel be not true, thou canst have no ground for any hope at all. And if it be true, thou art utterly cut off from all the hope of it, so long as thou continuest in thy present state. The Saviour, the almighty Saviour himself cannot save thee.—He cannot deny himself.—He cannot overturn the whole tenor of the gospel, and make himself the minister of sin.

And are thy unavailing hopes cut off—  
What course wilt thou then betake thyself to next? Even while I speak thou art on the brink of destruction—the wrath of God abideth on thee. Behold a black storm of  
vengeance

vengeance is gathering around thee, and thou art excluded from the only ark in which thou canst escape. And what excludes thee? Hear and blush, O sinner, even thine own obstinate folly. Nothing else can;—all the devils in Hell cannot shut thee out, unless thou wilt; and from Heaven thou canst meet with no hindrance, where all is love and goodness; so that if thou dost perish, it must be by thine own merciless hands. And wilt thou be thine own murderer? Wilt thou destroy an immortal soul? Desperate madness! O stop in time, and yet repent and believe, and all that is past shall be forgiven thee. This is the voice of the gospel. These are the tidings which I am warranted to deliver. The much injured Saviour himself shall pray for thee—and he has been praying for thee: For had he not, from year to year, procured saving mercy by his intercession, thou hadst been long ere now cut down as a cumberer of the ground. O then, let this melt down thy heart to an ingenuous sorrow for what is past, and sincere resolutions of amendment for the future. Throw thyself at the feet of this compassionate Saviour; commit thy cause to  
this

this prevailing high Priest—None ever perished that did so. Neither shalt thou, unless almighty power be weakened, or infinite compassions exhausted. Let this be the day of thy return. Speedily break covenant with hell and death, that thou mayest be inrolled among those whom the Father himself loves, and for whom the Son does in a peculiar manner constantly pray.

*3dly,* As for you who sincerely love the Redeemer, and believe that he is come out from God, to you belongs all the comfort of these gracious words: Whatever you ask in the name of Jesus shall be freely given you; for the Father himself loveth you, and his blessed Son constantly prays for you. Whatever carnal men may think of this, yet surely it is a privilege of which I hope you know both the value and use. To be allowed access to God at any rate, is a prodigious favour; but to come before him hopefully, with good assurance of being accepted, this is a signal blessing, which is peculiar to yourselves. Lift up thy head, then, O sincere believer. Does thy conscience bear testimony that thou lovest Jesus, and believest that he is  
the

the sent of God. Apply, then, these gracious words to thyself. The Father himself loveth thee, and makes thee welcome to use the prevailing name of his once suffering, but now exalted Son. In all thy difficulties come freely to him. ‘ Be careful for  
‘ nothing, but in every thing by prayer and  
‘ supplication, with thanksgiving, make thy  
‘ requests known to God.’ The Redeemer, too, enforces thy requests, and is more mindful of thee than thou canst be of thyself. He sympathises with thee in all thy infirmities and distresses; and when thou canst not utter thy desires, yet he understands the groanings of his own Spirit within thee. He forms thy petitions, and urges them with all their force; yea thy very need has a language which he can interpret. He foresees the trials that are coming upon thee, when thou dost not. Thus, whilst Peter was glorying in his strength, his Saviour, knowing his weakness, and the malice of Satan, was praying for him that his faith might not fail. The like provident tenderness will he shew to thee.

Even now, O believers, he is pleading on your behalf, whilst the Father listens with delight

light and approbation. He kindly accepts of this testimony of your love, in keeping up the memory of his bitter passion \* ; and no doubt all your well qualified prayers have been this day powerfully enforced by your faithful high Priest.

What shall I say more to you : Praise and thanksgiving is your duty at this time. Let your souls, and all that is within you, be stirred up to bless your heavenly Father, whose love was the fountain and spring of your happiness, and is still the foundation of your truest comfort.

Let your souls, and all that is within you, be stirred up to bless your gracious Redeemer, who hath ransomed you by his blood, and who, amid the exaltation of heaven, the splendour of his Father's right hand, still kindly remembers his humble followers, whose ears are ever open to their prayers, whose mouth is ever ready to plead their cause, and as if it were not love enough to die for them, who also lives and reigns for them, yea and even glories in being made head over all things to the church. Alas our praises are so feeble and  
low,

\* Preached at the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

low, that we may blush and be ashamed to offer them.

But do you not long for heaven, that with a more elevated song than this dull state can admit, you may join in praising this object of your love. Continue yet a little longer—have patience for a while, give some farther testimonies of your faith here, and he who intercedes for you will receive you to himself; and that you may not doubt of this, read and ponder these gracious verses with which I conclude, John, xvii. 24. ‘Fa-  
‘ther I will, that they also whom thou hast  
‘given me be with me, where I am, that  
‘they may behold the glory which thou hast  
‘given me; for thou lovedst me before the  
‘foundation of the world.’

To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God,  
be glory and honour, dominion and power,  
for ever. Amen.

## S E R M O N VI.

HEBREWS, xii. 28, 29.

*Wherefore, we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear : For our God is a consuming fire.*

**T**HE gospel of our salvation, which contains the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, is expressly stiled the doctrine which is according to godliness. It manifests the grace of God to sinners of mankind ; but all who receive that grace are thereby taught effectually to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world. It abounds with great and precious promises ; but all these promises have a practical tendency, that by the belief and improvement of them, we may be made partakers of the divine nature ; ha-  
ving

ving escaped the pollution that is in the world through lust. Hence that exhortation, II. Cor. vii. 1. ‘ Having therefore these pro-  
 ‘ mises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse our-  
 ‘ selves from all filthiness of the flesh and  
 ‘ spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of  
 ‘ God.’ If we look through the whole of divine revelation, we shall find in every part privilege and duty inseparably connected, and the latter uniformly inferred from the former. This connection is clearly established in the passage I have read to you, which contains,

- I. The distinguishing privilege of believers in Christ. ‘ We,’ saith the Apostle, in name of all true Christians, ‘ receiving a  
 ‘ kingdom which cannot be moved.’
- II. An exhortation to duty, founded upon this privilege, and the motives with which it is enforced; ‘ let us have grace where-  
 ‘ by we may serve God acceptably with  
 ‘ reverence and godly fear: For our God  
 ‘ is a consuming fire.’

Both these subjects are so extensive, that each of them might furnish materials for ma-

ny discourses. All I can at present propose is, to give some assistance to your minds when you meditate upon them in private, by weighing the import of the words in which they are expressed, every one of which appears to be strongly emphatical, and full of the most instructive and comfortable meaning.

I begin with the privilege of believers in Christ Jesus, expressed in these words, ‘ We  
‘ receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved.’  
Where you will observe,

1<sup>st</sup>, The designation that is given to their portion. It is stiled a kingdom, which, among earthly possessions, is universally admitted to hold the first rank; but what is the highest dignity, and the greatest affluence that this earth can afford, when compared with the kingdom whereof my text speaks. Would you know the extent of it, you may learn it from I. Cor. iii. 21. &c. ‘ All things are  
‘ yours.’ And it must be so, for God himself is the portion of his saints; for as many as receive Christ, ‘ to them gives he power to  
‘ become the sons of God, even to them that  
‘ believe on his name;—and if sons, then are  
‘ they also heirs, heirs of God, and joint  
‘ heirs

‘ heirs with Christ Jesus.’ Accordingly they are said, by the Apostle Peter, ‘ to be begotten again to the lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away ;’ which last expression agrees with the description here given by the Apostle, where he calls it a kingdom that cannot be moved ; and the stability of it is explained by Peter, in the passage I just now alluded to, where he not only informs us, that this inheritance is reserved in Heaven, beyond the reach of every adverse power ; but likewise, that all who are begotten again to the hope of it, ‘ are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.’

You will further observe, that believers are said to receive this kingdom. They have no natural right to it ; on the contrary, by the fatal apostacy, they are children of wrath, and heirs of destruction. They have no price to give for it ; for they are not only wretched and miserable, but poor, and blind, and naked. It is a gift altogether free and unmerited on their part. ‘ It is your Father’s good pleasure,’ said Christ to his disciples, ‘ to give you the kingdom ;’ and eternal life

is exprefsly faid to be ‘ the gift of God  
‘ through Jefus Chrift our Lord.’

Once more you will obferve, that this inheritance is not altogether future. The Apoftle fpeaks of it as a prefent poffeffion. He doth not fay, We looking for a kingdom that cannot be moved; but, we receiving it, in the mean time. This is perfectly agreeable to what he had faid, verfe 22. ‘ Ye are come  
‘ unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the  
‘ living God, the heavenly Jerufalem, and to  
‘ an innumerable company of angels, to the  
‘ general affembly and church of the firft  
‘ born, which are written in heaven, and to  
‘ God the judge of all, and to the fpirits of  
‘ juft men made perfect, and to Jefus the  
‘ mediator of the new covenant, and to the  
‘ blood of fprinkling, that fpeaketh better  
‘ things than that of Abel.’ Believers have not only a title to the glory that fhall afterwards be revealed, but they poffefs the earneft and firft fruits of it in the mean time. Heaven is already begun in their hearts; the kingdom of God is within them, that kingdom which ‘ confifteth not in meats and  
‘ drinks, but in righteoufnefs, and peace, and  
‘ joy

‘ joy in the Holy Ghost.—He who loved  
‘ them, and washed them from their sins in  
‘ his own blood, hath also made them kings  
‘ and priests unto God.—By beholding his  
‘ glory, with the eye of faith, they are chan-  
‘ ged into the same image, from glory to glo-  
‘ ry,’ while they sojourn here below, as we  
read, II. Cor. iii. 18. This resemblance, at  
present indeed imperfect, shall continually  
advance, through the influences of the divine  
Spirit, till, being released from the prison of  
the body, they shall no more see darkly as  
through a glass, but face to face; and by see-  
ing him as he is, shall be fully transformed  
into his image, which will render them com-  
pletely happy, as it is written, I. John iii. 2.  
‘ Beloved, 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.’

Thus have I opened the import of the  
terms by which the Apostle describes the dig-  
nity and happiness of believers in Christ Je-  
sus. By their new birth, and in consequence  
of their union with the Lord Jesus Christ,

they are constituted heirs of a kingdom which it is their Father's good pleasure to bestow upon them by free gift; this kingdom cannot be moved; it was prepared for them before the foundation of the world; it is reserved for them in heaven, and they are kept for it through faith by the power of God; and though the full possession of it, in all its glory, awaits them in a future state, yet they have their maintenance and provision out of it in the mean time, the new nature they have got is not only the pledge, but the earnest of the inheritance, being of the same kind with that glory which is afterwards to be revealed; they at present receive eternal life, a life that cannot die, but, like the morning light, shall continue to shine with increasing brightness, till in heaven it shall arrive at the perfect day.

Such is the present dignity and happiness of all true believers in Christ Jesus; in this sense the weakest, as well as the strong, receive a kingdom which cannot be moved.

II. Let us consider the exhortation to duty, founded upon this privilege, 'Let us have grace.'

1<sup>st</sup>, We are called upon to serve God. Believers, though kings, are still the subjects of the King of kings; and the honour conferred upon them, instead of relaxing their obligation to duty, rather binds them to serve him with greater zeal and activity. Their very royalty consists in their release from the enemies of God which formerly enslaved and led them captive at their pleasure. Hence that exhortation of the Apostle, 'Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies.' They are stiled, in the book of the Revelation, 'Kings and priests to God, even the Father;' and dominion is given them, not in respect of God, to render them independent on him, but in respect of sin, Satan, the world, and death, over all which they are made conquerors through him that loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood. They are indeed a chosen generation, and a royal priesthood; but for what end? it is, that by bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, 'they may shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.'

2dly, We are reminded of the qualification that is requisite for serving God acceptably. We cannot do this by any strength that is inherent in us. ‘ We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves.’ We are indeed exhorted to work out our own salvation; but at the same time we are told, ‘ that it is God who worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.’ The Apostle’s words are chosen with the most significant propriety. He doth not say, Let us take strength to ourselves; or, let us purchase it from another; but, Let us have it; *i. e.* Let us ask it of him who giveth liberally—Let us possess it, by receiving the gift that is offered; or, having received it, let us hold it fast, as the word is rendered in the margin, and improve it to the purposes for which it was bestowed.

3dly, We are directed to the manner of serving God, so as to be accepted of him, viz. ‘ with reverence and godly fear;’ *i. e.* with a deep sense of his infinite greatness, and of our own meanness and unworthiness. We are indeed exhorted and encouraged to come boldly to a throne of grace; but it must be

be such a boldness only as becometh those who stand in need both of mercy and grace, of mercy to pardon what hath been amiss, and of grace to help them in every time of need. 'There is forgiveness with thee,' said the Psalmist, 'that thou mayst be feared.' And indeed mercy is dispensed in such a way, as renders God no less awful than he is amiable to the pardoned sinner. The sacrifice of Christ, while it manifests the love of God, in giving his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, affords, at the same time, the strongest proof and demonstration of his holiness and justice. The new and living way of access to God is consecrated for us through the veil of Christ's flesh. The blood that cleanseth from all sin, by which we have boldness to enter into the holiest, is the blood of Emanuel, the word made flesh, by whom all things were made, and without whom was not any thing made that is made. A proper attention to this will shew both the meaning and propriety of the Apostle's direction to serve God with reverence and godly fear; not the tormenting fear which cherisheth that enmity against God, whereby the carnal

mind is characterised; but that filial reverence which flows from a supreme love to God, as a reconciled father, and desire to please him, which consists in a holy jealousy of ourselves, an abhorrence of every thing that is offensive to God, and produceth a carefulness to avoid every temptation to sin, and to shun not only the forbidden, but even the doubtful ground, according to that just description which is given of it, Prov. viii. 12. ‘ The  
 ‘ fear of the Lord is to hate evil.’ And the genuine effects of this fear are fully expressed in those advices of the Wise Man, which are recorded, chap. iv. at the close. ‘ Keep thy heart  
 ‘ with all diligence—Let thine eyes look right  
 ‘ on, and let thine eye-lids look straight before  
 ‘ thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let  
 ‘ all thy ways be established. Turn not to  
 ‘ the right hand nor to the left; remove thy  
 ‘ feet from evil.’ Such is the reverence and godly fear with which we are directed to serve the Lord.

Let us now briefly consider the arguments with which the exhortation is enforced; and these are two—The one, respecting the matter of duty in general—And the other, the  
 manner

manner in which the service that is due to God ought to be performed.

*1<sup>st</sup>*, We are exhorted to serve God, in testimony of our gratitude for the inestimable benefits his grace hath conferred upon us. This argument is plainly addressed to believers in Christ, who have received that kingdom which cannot be moved. The Apostle doth not say, Let us serve God that we may obtain a kingdom; but, having received it, as the free gift of God, through faith in his Son, who purchased it with his blood, let us express our thankfulness, by devoting ourselves, and all that we have, or can do, to his service. This is the plain and obvious meaning of the Apostle's argument; and in order to make this passage of Scripture speak the language of that scheme of religion which is too current in the world, the words of it would need to be transposed and varied in some such manner as this:

Prompted by self-love, and the tormenting fear of future punishment, let us resolve in our minds, for we neither need nor expect supernatural grace, that henceforth we will serve God, as well as the world and the flesh will

will permit, that so we may escape damnation, and procure a title to, or at least the probable chance of a kingdom, which, after all, may not only be moved, but so agitated and shaken, that without a vigorous exertion of the powers we possess, we ourselves may be tossed out of it, and fall into perdition. Thus ridiculous are the best efforts of human wisdom, to corrupt the plain meaning of Scripture language, and to accommodate the constitution of gospel grace to that pride and self-idolatry, which, ever since the apostacy, reign in the heart of every natural man.

Whereas the gospel of Christ binds us to duty by the cords of love, and while it presseth holy diligence and activity in the service of God, by the most persuasive arguments, it animates us, at the same time, with the most comfortable assurance, that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. Help is laid for us upon one who is mighty, even that good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep, who gathers the lambs in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young. Therefore they shall never perish, because none are able to pluck them out

of

of his hand. He gives unto them eternal life, and they enter upon the possession of it at their new birth, when, by believing on his name, the power, or rather the privilege, is given them, to become the sons of God. His grace is sufficient for them at all times, and in every situation. He is gone to his Father's house to prepare a place for them; and he will come again and receive them to himself, that where he is there they may be also, to behold that glory which his Father hath given him. 'Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.'

The *Second* argument, which respects the manner of our service, is contained in these words, 'For our God is a consuming fire.' This, at first sight, does not seem to accord with the other argument, which is addressed to the ingenuity and gratitude of a renewed heart; but appears rather adapted to the spirit of bondage, than to that spirit of adoption which believers in Christ receive, whereby they are disposed and enabled to call God,  
Father.

Father. But I shall direct you to two passages of Scripture, which, I apprehend, will remove this difficulty, and lead us to the true meaning and intent of the Apostle's argument.

One is, *Isaiah xxxi. 9.* where it is said, as a ground of fear to the enemies of Zion, and consequently as a ground of encouragement to her children, that 'the Lord hath his fire  
' in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.'

The other is *Mal. iii. 2.* where the Messenger of the Covenant and King of Zion is compared to a refiner's fire, and fuller's soap. 'He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.' In this sense he is a consuming fire to the godly; he refines them, by consuming their dross. This view of God, indeed, is terrible to the wicked, who are all dross; but it hath another aspect to the godly, who are made partakers of the divine nature. The fire that burns up the enemies of God altogether, shall only consume the dross that still cleaves to them, and from  
which

which they will never be wholly separated, till death dissolve their earthly tabernacles. Nevertheless, this is urged, with great propriety, as an argument for serving God with reverence and godly fear; for the means of purifying may be very painful in the meantime, and, as it is written, Psalm xcix. 8. 'Though he forgives their sins, yet he will take vengeance of their inventions.' The children of God may be assured of it, that the rod shall not be withheld—their own backslidings shall be made to reprove them; 'for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.' And therefore they should serve God with reverence, that a moderate furnace may suffice to purge away their dross, and that it may not become necessary, that God, for their correction, should wound their hearts in the tenderest part, by taking from them their dearest earthly comforts, or withdrawing the light of his countenance utterly from them. 'Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.'

## S E R M O N VII.

ISAIAH, xxii. 12.—14.

*And in that day did the Lord of Hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth; and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you, till ye die, saith the Lord God of Hosts.*

**T**HIS passage is introduced with a loud and pressing call to repentance. It describes the contemptuous behaviour of the people to whom the call was addressed; and concludes with an alarming denunciation of wrath against those perverse and obstinate transgressors.

Each

Each of these particulars I shall briefly illustrate; and then point out our immediate concern in the subject, and the practical improvement we all ought to make of it.

The *First* thing that occurs is the call to repentance, verse 12. ‘ In that day did the Lord of Hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth.’

The day here referred to was a season of abounding iniquity, as we learn from the first chapter of this book of prophecy, which begins with a heavy charge against the nation of the Jews, published with awful solemnity by God himself, in the following words: ‘ Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken! I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation! a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters. They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy

‘ Holy one of Israel to anger, they have  
 ‘ gone away backward.’ Accordingly the  
 prophet, in bespeaking their attention to the  
 message he was about to deliver, address-  
 ed them, in terms of severe reproach, verse  
 10. ‘ Hear the words of the Lord, ye rulers  
 ‘ of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our  
 ‘ God, ye people of Gomorrah.’ And the  
 lamentation he utters, verse 21. shews with  
 what justice and propriety those titles of ig-  
 nominy were applied to them. ‘ How is  
 ‘ the faithful city become an harlot! It was  
 ‘ full of judgment, righteousness lodged in  
 ‘ it; but now murderers. Thy silver is be-  
 ‘ come dross, thy wine mixt with water.  
 ‘ Thy princes are rebellious, and companions  
 ‘ of thieves; every one loveth gifts, and fol-  
 ‘ loweth after rewards.’

Their boldness and impudence in sinning  
 are particularly taken notice of, as high ag-  
 gravations of their guilt, chap. iii. verses 8.  
 & 9. ‘ The shew of their countenance doth  
 ‘ witness against them, and they declare their  
 ‘ sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Their  
 ‘ tongue and their doings are against the  
 ‘ Lord, to provoke the eye of his glory.’

Neither

Neither was this accusation limited to the men of that age, for, verse 16. even the daughters of Zion are represented as ‘ haughty, walking with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they went,’ under the cumbersome load of tinkling ornaments, chains, and bracelets, and the many other superfluous articles of dress, of which a catalogue is left on record from the 18th verse downward, till, at the 24th verse, the fantastic inventory is closed with that humiliating doom: ‘ It shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell, there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle, a rent; and instead of well set hair, baldness; and burning instead of beauty.’

This leads me to mention another circumstance, by which the day referred to in my text is distinguished. It was a day of fore rebuke, as well as of abounding iniquity. ‘ Look away from me,’ said the prophet, verse 4th of this chapter, ‘ I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people; for it is a day of trouble, and of treading  
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‘ down, and of perplexity, by the Lord God  
‘ of Hosts in the valley of vision.’

Such was the day in which the Lord God of Hosts did call to weeping and mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth, *i. e.* to the deepest humiliation on account of their sins, to the most unfeigned repentance, and amendment of life. That this is the true import of the call appears from a similar exhortation, Joel ii. 12. where, after the Lord had given commandment to blow the trumpet in Zion, and to sound an alarm in his holy mountain, that all the inhabitants of the land might tremble in the prospect of that day of darkness and gloominess, which was soon to be spread over them. He addresses them in these words: ‘ Turn ye even  
‘ to me with all your heart, with weeping  
‘ and with mourning, and rent your hearts  
‘ and not your garments, and turn unto the  
‘ Lord your God.’

In every age, and in every climate, weeping and mourning are the natural expressions of inward sorrow. In the eastern countries, and especially among the Jews, when grief rose to a great height, tears of lamentations were

were usually accompanied with rending their cloaths, plucking out their hair, and covering their bodies with sack-cloth. And though these outward signs are only the trappings of woe, which are no further acceptable than as they truly express the sorrow and contrition of the heart, yet, in the case before us, they are expressly required of that impudent and hard hearted people, that as their tongue and their doings had been against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory, so their shame and sorrow might be proclaimed as openly as their sin, and their penitent return to God might be no less apparent, than their proud and insolent revolt had been.

Having made these remarks upon the import of the call, and the state of the Jews in the day it was published to them, let me now,

II. Lead forward your attention to the account that is given us of the reception it met with, verse 13. And behold it is introduced, you see, with a note of—(what shall I call it)—Whether doth it bespeak our admiration, or astonishment? The object must

irely be wonderful, either for beauty or deformity, to which the great God himself demands our attention with such solemnity.

Say then, my brethren, were you not already acquainted with what follows, would you not expect to see a multitude of humble penitents, prostrate on the ground, and covered with sack-cloth, while, with weeping and mourning, they say one to another, in the language of genuine repentance, ‘ Come  
 ‘ and let us return unto the Lord, for he  
 ‘ hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath  
 ‘ smitten, and he will bind us up.’ But what do we really see? Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid. Instead of mourning and weeping, behold joy and gladness; instead of baldness and girding with sack-cloth, behold every kind of riotous excess, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine.

There is no room to suppose that they had given no attention to the message delivered by the prophet. It would rather appear that they had attended to it with accuracy, nay studied its meaning, on purpose to counteract it: For a contrast so minutely exact, a scheme  
 of

of contradiction so completely adjusted, could hardly have been stumbled upon by mere accident. And indeed the latter part of the verse puts this beyond all doubt, ‘ *Let us eat and drink, said they, for to-morrow we shall die.*’

We are not to imagine that these words were spoken seriously, by one of those presumptuous and boasting rebels. The most daring amongst them must have been conscious, that the aspect of the king of terrors, at their most sumptuous entertainments, would leave them no appetite either for flesh or wine. They meant it as a scoff, a witty saying, for turning into ridicule the warning they had received, but which they did not believe. The prophet hath been telling us of desolating judgments just at hand, and with the same breath he calls us to weeping, and mourning, and girding with sack-cloth. How absurd, how unreasonably cruel is the demand? Will not the evil day come soon enough, though we should not anticipate the sorrows of it, by afflicting ourselves unnecessarily before its arrival? Nay rather, if life is to be cut short, let us make the most of it

while it lasts. If we must die to-morrow, let us eat and drink and be merry to-day, and crowd into the few scanty hours that remain, as much festivity and pleasure as we can.

Surely it is not needful that I should lengthen out this picture of deformity in all its dimensions. Its most distinguishing features are abundantly obvious; and I am confident, that the few sketches I have given you, will suffice to render the generation it represents the objects of contempt and abhorrence to all; those very persons not excepted, who, in the portrait drawn for them, may perhaps discover their own true likeness: For it is common enough to condemn with just, though partial severity, the same faults in others which we easily forgive, nay cherish, in ourselves. At any rate, I suppose none of us will be surpris'd to hear the alarming denunciation of wrath against those perverse and obstinate transgressors, which is the

III. Particular contained in my text, verse 14. ' It was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, surely this iniquity shall not

‘ not be purged from you till ye die, faith  
‘ the Lord God of Hosts.’

We meet with another threatening of the same import, Ezek. xxiv. 13. ‘ Because I  
‘ have purged thee, and thou was not purged,  
‘ thou shalt not be purged from thy filthi-  
‘ nefs any more, till I have caused my fury  
‘ to rest upon thee. I the Lord have spoken  
‘ it, and it shall come to pass, and I will do  
‘ it. I will not go back, neither will I spare,  
‘ neither will I repent, faith the Lord God.’

These wicked men had not only resisted the means of conviction, but they had perverted those means, and extracted poison from the medicine intended for their cure. They drew iniquity with cords of vanity, and sinned as it were with a cart rope. By their scoffing reply to the call that was given them, in the name of the Lord God of Hosts, they said in effect, with insolent contempt, and proud defiance, ‘ Let him make speed,  
‘ and hasten his work, that we may see it;  
‘ and let the counsel of the Holy One of  
‘ Israel draw nigh and come, that we may  
‘ know it.’ The prophet therefore proclaims, as on the house top, what God had

revealed in his ears, that from that time forward vengeance should pursue those impious men, till, like their rebellious forefathers, whose carcases fell in the wilderness, they should be utterly consumed from off the face of the earth.

Thus have I endeavoured briefly to illustrate the several parts of the passage before us.

But what concern have we in these things? and, What improvement shall we make of them?

For an answer to these questions, I need only refer you to I. Cor. chap. x. where, after reciting some of those awful judgments which God had inflicted upon his antient church, the Apostle subjoins those memorable words, verse 11th, ‘ Now all these things happened  
‘ unto them for ensamples, and they are writ-  
‘ ten for our admonition, upon whom the  
‘ ends of the world are come.’

‘ The Lord is known by the judgments  
‘ which he executes.’ God is always the same; with him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. And therefore, in  
his

his past acts of government, as they are explained by his word, we behold a plan of righteous administration, from whence we may learn, with some degree of certainty, what kind of treatment, in similar circumstances, we ourselves have reason to expect.

They must know little of what passes in the world, who do not observe a very striking resemblance between the present state of our own nation, and that of the Jews, in the day to which my text refers.

Ingratitude to God, for the great things he hath done in our behalf, and for the distinguishing privileges we have long enjoyed, is too apparent to require any proof. Our deliverance from Popery at the Reformation; and the full establishment of our civil and religious liberties at the Revolution; these marvellous doings of the Lord are either forgotten by many, as a dead man out of mind, or at least remembered with cold indifference; nay, treated with marks of disaffection by some, while the characters of those illustrious men, whom God honoured to be the instruments in bringing about these glorious events, have been canvassed with the  
utmost

utmost severity of criticism, and under the specious pretext of candour and impartiality, set forth to public view in the most unfavourable light.

Have not vice and immorality grown up among us to an amazing height? Do not multitudes proclaim their sins as Sodom? and instead of hiding them, do they not rather glory in their shame, as if they accounted it an honour to excel in one species of wickedness or another? I do not aggravate the charge, every one's observation may convince him of the truth of it. Is there not a visible and growing contempt of the blessed gospel? Are not its ordinances despised by some, and profaned by others; nay, is it not by many deemed a mark of superior genius, to reject the whole of divine revelation, as a cunningly devised fable, and to employ all their influence in proselyting others to their opinion?

What small success attends the preaching of the gospel even among those who profess to believe? Into how many sects and parties are they divided? With what zeal do they build up their walls of partition? With what animosity

animosity do they contend for their own peculiarities, as points of new and important discovery, though in fact most of them might lay claim to a very antient date, have been often republished, and as often refuted? Now, union is the strength of the religious, as well as of the civil community; and there is reason to fear that God will suffer that candlestick to be removed from among us, about which we quarrel and fight with one another, instead of walking by the light it affords, and performing the work which was given us to do.

I shall not waste any part of your time upon the mere triflers of either sex, who literally walk in a vain shew, and ought rather to be regarded as the scenery or decorations of the theatre, than as actors sustaining any character upon the stage. Yet even they, light as they may seem, make some addition to the load of national guilt, as we learn from the passage respecting the daughters of Zion, in the third chapter of this prophecy, which I formerly quoted. Enough has been said to prove, that we are a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, and that  
the

the call to repentance is proper and seasonable, and belongs to the very day in which our lot is cast.

Indeed our very meeting together in this place is a public acknowledgment of it \*. For what purpose are we convened by Royal authority? Is it not that we may humble ourselves before almighty God, and send up our prayers and supplications to the divine Majesty, for obtaining pardon of our sins, and for averting those heavy judgments which our manifold provocations have most justly deserved.

Thus far we may be assured that the call of the Lord of Hosts hath been distinctly and faithfully echoed from the throne. And least after all we should turn a deaf ear to his voice, the Lord of Hosts hath written the same call upon the face of providence, in characters so legible, that they must be worse than blind who do not read and understand them.

The little cloud like a man's hand, that  
arose

\* Preached on a public fast-day, in the time of the American war.

arose a few years ago on the other side of the Atlantic, hath ever since been increasing, both in size and in blackness.

Our envious and deceitful neighbours, who, by secret artifice, have endeavoured from the beginning to keep the unhappy breach open between Great Britain and her colonies, have at length laid aside the mask, and are now straining every nerve to spread the desolations of war through the whole extent of the British empire.

The sword that was drawn for coercion abroad, now finds employment for self-defence at home; and the measures hitherto pursued have been so ineffectual, that after much expence of blood and treasure, we may say with the Jews, in the days of Jeremiah, chap. xiv. 19. ‘ We looked for peace, and  
‘ there is no good; and for the time of heal-  
‘ ing, and behold trouble.’

What shall we say to these things? Do they bear no impress of God’s holy and righteous displeasure?—Will a lion roar in  
‘ the forest, when he hath no prey? Will a  
‘ young lion cry in his den, if he hath taken  
‘ nothing? Can a bird fall in a snare upon  
‘ the

‘ the earth, where no gin is for him? Shall  
 ‘ one take up a snare from the earth, and  
 ‘ have taken nothing at all? Shall a trumpet  
 ‘ be blown in the city, and the people not be  
 ‘ afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and  
 ‘ the Lord hath not done it? The lion hath  
 ‘ roared, who will not fear? The Lord God  
 ‘ hath spoken, who can but prophecy?’

Our own wickedness is made to correct us,  
 and our backslidings reprove us, that we may  
*know and see what an evil thing it is and*  
*bitter, that we have forsaken the Lord our*  
*God.*

This, my brethren, is the primary aim of  
 all God’s corrections. He doth not afflict  
 willingly; nor grieve the children of men;  
 but when transgressors will not learn the ma-  
 lignity of sin by gentler means, then he  
 causes them to feel the evil of it in the bit-  
 terness of affliction. Hence it appears, that  
 temporal judgments are acts of mercy, as  
 well as of justice, especially when they are of  
 such a nature as to bear the stamp and signa-  
 ture of those sins which are the cause of  
 them. Till we discern the hand of God in  
 the sufferings that befall us, we shall never  
 have

have recourse to the true and the only effectual remedy. When public measures are defeated, we shall sometimes blame the contrivance, and at other times the execution; but still we shall look to the creature for help, and place our trust in the arm of flesh.

This was an express article of indictment against the Jews, in the preceding context. They used every precaution to put their city into a proper state of defence. They inspected their magazines; they repaired the breaches in their walls; and provided large store of water for a siege. In all this they acted wisely, and did no more than was their duty. But herein lay their fault, verse 11th, they relied upon the preparations for the safety of Jerusalem, and *'did not look unto the maker thereof, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago.'*

I have therefore endeavoured to lead your attention to God himself, and to trace up all the penal evils we feel to the several instances of our criminal departure from him, as their true origin and source; and though, perhaps, I may have erred in the illustration of particulars, yet I cannot help thinking that the  
general

general truth will appear with sufficient evidence, that our own backslidings are reprov- ing us, and that we ourselves have made the rod with which we are smitten.

By this time we may all see our concern in this subject, and the improvement we ought to make of it.

It is righteousness alone that exalteth a nation. Repentance towards God, flowing from faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, is the only effectual means for preventing the ruin of a sinful people. Without this we may obtain a temporary respite from punishment; but the clouds will return again after the rain, and all the while we are filling up the measure of our iniquity, the consumption is advancing, and every day we draw nearer and nearer to dissolution. Whereas if we accept of the punishment of our iniquity, and put away from us those evil doings which provoke the Lord to jealousy, then may we hope that he will return to us in mercy, and rejoice over us to bless us and to do us good; according to that encouraging promise, Jer. xviii. 7. ‘ At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a king-  
dom,

“ dom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and  
“ to destroy ; if that nation, against which I  
‘ have pronounced, turn from their evil, I  
‘ also will repent of the evil that I thought  
‘ to do unto them.’

It is this which should always give check to any desponding thoughts. We have but ONE to please, ONE whose favour is desirable, and ONE who is most easily pleased ; because he hath told us, without ambiguity, what will please him ; and at the same time hath declared his readiness to aid our feeble endeavours, by working in us effectually both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Let us then hearken to the call of the Lord God of Hosts. Let us, with weeping and mourning, return to him, from whom, alas, we have deeply revolted, and ask of him, this day, the spirit of repentance, and grace to walk in newness of life, by bringing forth fruits meet for repentance.

In this way only can we hope, that he who hath the hearts of all men in his hands, will give judgment to them who sit in judgment, and strength to those who turn

the battle from the gate; and cause our eyes  
once more to see our Jerufalem a quiet habita-  
tion, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down,  
none of whose cords shall be broken, neither  
any of the stakes thereof ever removed.  
Amen.

S E R-

## S E R M O N VIII.

REVELATION, iii. 18.

*I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich ; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed ; and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see.*

**B**EFORE I enter upon the consideration of this gracious counsel, I conceive it may be of use to give you some account, *first*, of the person who gave the advice ; and, *secondly*, of those to whom it was addressed.

The person, who gave the advice, was our Lord Jesus Christ ; that Wonderful Counsellor, and Prince of Peace, foretold by the prophet Isaiah, of the increase of whose government there shall be no end. Here he styles himself the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness : One whose word may be depended up-

on, who does not come and go, say and unsay, but who is always in one mind, without any variableness or shadow of turning. He is God's witness to the sons of men, and as he is perfectly acquainted with the Father, so he faithfully reports the Father's mind and will to us. His testimony is infallible; for as he cannot be deceived himself, so neither is he capable of deceiving others. I need scarcely observe to you the vast importance of this part of his character. Indeed without it, our faith, and consequently our hope and comfort, would be mere delusion; but blessed be God, the truth and faithfulness of this divine witness, doth infinitely remove from us every possible cause or ground of suspicion. Men may utter falsehoods through mistake and ignorance; or even when they know the truth, they may be induced, by selfish views, to conceal or disguise it. But neither of these grounds of distrust are applicable to our Lord. His knowledge is unlimited, and absolutely perfect; and his infinite fulness and self-sufficiency, raise him above all kinds of dissimulation or artifice. And probably this is the reason why he stiles himself, in the close  
of

of the 14th verse, the Beginning, or first Cause, of the Creation of God. He can have no dependence upon the workmanship of his own hands. As their goodness cannot profit him, neither can their malice hurt him; so that he can be under no temptation, either to overawe them with imaginary terrors, or to allure them with vain and flattering promises. Well then, the character of our Counsellor is fair and untainted, and, if the advice he gives us is kind and obliging, there is no room to question the sincerity of his good-will. Here, therefore, my brethren, is one great point gained; and, as I am afterwards to lay a considerable stress upon it, I beg you may attend to it in the mean time, and consider, as I go along, that the person who spoke in this passage, and in whose name I now speak to you, is the Faithful and True Witness, the independent Creator and Governor of the world.

Let us next inquire who the persons were to whom the advice or counsel was addressed. In general they were members of Christ's visible church, and inhabitants of the antient city of Laodicea; it appears also from the

description given of them, that, with respect to their spiritual concerns, they were in a very degenerate and wretched condition. The first thing taken notice of is their luke-warmness and indifference—a temper which is peculiarly loathsome and offensive to Christ, and therefore he threatens to ‘*spue* them out of his mouth,’ that is, to testify his displeasure against them, by some very awful and remarkable judgments. Their state is more fully represented in the verse preceding my text, where the Faithful and True Witness tells them that they were wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; and which prodigiously aggravated both their guilt and misery—they knew it not—they were insensible of it; though they might have known it, yet they would not. Such was their woful indifference, that they did not examine their spiritual condition, but took it for granted, and boasted of it, that they were rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing. And now judge, my brethren, whether these persons were worthy of any notice or regard, I mean in a way of mercy; for that they merited wrath, I suppose you will readily allow.

low. Behold then, and admire the amazing grace and condescension of our Lord. Though the wickedness of the Laodiceans, aggravated by their pride and loathsome indifference, cried aloud for vengeance, and nothing but vengeance, yet, lo! he vouchsafes to counsel them as a friend!—O how encouraging may this be to those who are burdened with a sense of their guilt and pollution—who see their need of Christ, and pant and long for his great salvation. You say you are unworthy of his aid, and you are right when you say so; but such is his grace, as appears from this epistle, that the greatest unworthiness is no bar in the way of it. He not only counsels, but entreats those Laodiceans; whose condition was as bad as can well be imagined. ‘Behold,’ says he, in the 20th verse, ‘I stand at the door and knock; if any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.’ Here, then, is sufficient evidence, that there is mercy with Christ for the chief of sinners: This was his very errand, to seek and to save that which was lost. And therefore every soul that feels its mi-

fery has no reason to be discouraged, because of its unworthiness; on the contrary, this very temper lays it as it were in the way of his mercy; for though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly.—He resists the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.—Yea, he dwells with those who are of a contrite spirit, and that tremble at his word. The use I intend to make of this is to obviate an objection which frequently proves hurtful to newly converted sinners. They are tempted to think that their case does not admit of any hope; having dark and imperfect views of the grace of the gospel, they put away from themselves the sweetest and most condescending offers of mercy, supposing that they are not addressed to them, but to others whose guilt is less aggravated than theirs; but give me leave to assure you, in the name of the Faithful and True Witness, whose message I now bear, that the counsel I have read to you, and which I am farther to open, is directed to every soul within these walls, the vilest not excepted. Are you wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked—Hearken to the advice of your  
gracious

gracious Lord, an advice which he gives to every one of you in particular, as if he called you by your name.

‘ I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in  
 ‘ the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and white  
 ‘ raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and  
 ‘ that the shame of thy nakedness do not ap-  
 ‘ pear ; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve,  
 ‘ that thou mayest see.’

It is needless to inquire very critically into the precise meaning of these figurative expressions. I reckon that every necessary blessing, even all the unfearchable riches of Christ, are comprehended in these three articles. It is sufficient to observe, that the supply here offered is exactly suited to the sinners wants—that it is not scanty and penurious, but full and compleat—and that all the parts of it are perfect in their kind. Let us dwell a little upon each of these heads.

I. Then, you will observe, That the supply here offered is exactly suited to the sinners wants.—As we come into the world we  
 are

are poor bankrupt creatures. Adam had a vast stock put into his hands; but by his apostasy from God, he lost it for himself and for all his posterity, so that nothing is left that we can call our own, but guilt and misery. The image of God, which was the glory and riches of man in his first creation, is quite effaced, so that, as the Apostle expresses it, ‘in us, that is in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing.’ Well, then, to supply this woful defect, Christ here tells us that he hath gold to enrich us—even all divine and saving graces. The Spirit was given to him without measure, to be communicated to his people. He is able not only to expel that corruption which hath got possession of our natures; but he can give us a new heart—an heart stamped with the image of God, and make us partakers of the divine nature. The truth of this is attested by the Apostle John, from his own experience, John, i. 16. where he says, ‘of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.’

Another branch of our misery is **NAKEDNESS**. We have nothing to cover us either from shame or hurt. We are exposed to the  
wrath

wrath of an holy, just, and omnipotent God, who infinitely hates sin, and hath pledged his faithfulness, that he will not suffer it to pass unpunished. To relieve us in this case of extreme necessity, Christ hath raiment to clothe us, that the shame of our nakedness may not appear. He can spread his righteousness over us. He can sprinkle us with his atoning blood, so that the destroying angel, the minister of his Father's justice, shall have no power to hurt us: 'For there is no  
' condemnation to them who are in Christ  
' Jesus—being justified by faith, we have  
' peace with God, through our Lord Jesus  
' Christ.'

Again, we are BLIND creatures, having our understandings darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us. To remedy this, our great physician hath eye-salve to anoint our eyes that we may see. By his Holy Spirit, he can dispel the thickest darkness, and diffuse heavenly light through the whole soul. 'Ye were  
' sometimes darkness,' says Paul to the converted Ephesians, 'but now are ye light in  
' the Lord.' In a word, something is to be  
found

found in Christ that exactly suits us in every case we can imagine. He hath bread for the hungry, water for the thirsty, wine for the faint, medicine for the sick ; or, as the Apostle beautifully expresses it, ‘ He is made of God  
 ‘ unto his people, wisdom, and righteousness,  
 ‘ and sanctification, and redemption.’ I. Cor.  
 i. 30.

II. It deserves our notice, that the supply here offered is not only such as we need, but likewise full and compleat. A poor man may get an alms to keep him from perishing, a naked creature may get a rag to cover his nakedness, and to screen his body from the inclemency of the weather ; but our bountiful Lord doth not deal with his people in such a sparing and niggardly manner. He gives them gold to enrich them—not merely to relieve their wants, to answer their pressing necessities—but to raise them above poverty. He advances them to a large and opulent estate. The raiment he clothes them with is fair and complete, so that the shame of their nakedness can no more be seen. He covers them from head to foot, spreads his whole satisfaction

faction over them, so that no part is left exposed to the sword of justice. They are made righteous by his righteousness imputed to them, and comely by his comeliness put upon them. And,

III. As this supply is suitable and full, so I farther observed to you, That all the parts of it are perfect in their kind.—His gold is the most fine gold, gold tried in the fire, not only precious in itself, but thoroughly purged from all dross or alloy.—His raiment is white, without spot or blemish; not only a covering, but an ornament to the soul.—His eye-salve has a sovereign and never-failing virtue. Other medicines may strengthen the eye, or recover a weak sight; but this cures blindness itself, and gives such vigour to the eye that is anointed with it, that the person can even look within the veil, and read his name written in the Lamb's book of life. And now let me ask you, What think ye of Christ? Is he not a Gracious, as well as a Faithful Witness? Are not his offers great, inconceivably great? and is not this counsel most kind and obliging?

But

But what is his counsel, and how does he direct us to obtain this full and all-sufficient supply? Let us hear his own words:

‘ I counsel thee,’ says he, ‘ to buy it of me’—

I frankly own to you, there is something in this expression which startles one at the first sight; but when we examine it more accurately, the difficulty vanishes. It is evident that the word *buy* cannot be taken in a strict and literal sense, unless we suppose it to have been said by way of ridicule; for the description of those to whom the advice was addressed, necessarily implies that they had nothing to give. They were in the greatest extremity of misery and wretchedness, not only blind and naked, but poor, without money to buy either clothing or medicine; Where, then, could they find a price that bore any proportion to the blessings here spoken of? I think I could challenge the most sanguine advocate for merit to tell me what these people had to give, unless it was self-conceit, of which, indeed, it appears they had enough and to spare; for poor and naked as they were, they boasted of great things, saying  
they

they were rich and increased with goods, and had need of nothing. Indeed I am of opinion, that this hint may help us to the meaning of the expression; for the very notion of buying necessarily includes in it that something must be parted with; and as these Laodiceans had nothing to dispose of but their pride, our Saviour's advice might be intended to intimate this much to them, that in order to their receiving these invaluable blessings, it behoved them to forgoe their self-conceit in the first place, and then to come to him naked and empty as they were, under a deep and humble sense of their poverty and wretchedness, and on their knees to accept those offered mercies, as the free unmerited gifts of his bounty and grace. This accordingly is perfectly agreeable to other passages of Scripture, particularly to that gracious proclamation and call, Isa. lv. 1. to which the counsel here offered has a very near resemblance. '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 mo-  
' ney and without price.' Which last ex-  
pression

pression, 'without price,' seems to have been added on purpose to guard against any wrong sense that might otherwise have been put upon the word *buying*. A person who wants money, may have other things of value to trade with; but here they are called to buy not only without money, but without price; that is, in plain language, to buy and pay nothing, which is only another way of expressing the humble and thankful acceptance of a gift. It is even probable that our Saviour chose this rather than another expression, to signify that their acceptance should not be rash and hasty, but deliberate and well advised; and at the same time to assure them, that upon their acceptance, these invaluable blessings should become as truly and irrevocably theirs, as if they had really bought them, and given a full and adequate price for them.

Thus have I opened the meaning of this counsel or advice—an advice seasonable at all times, and peculiarly adapted to the occasion of our present meeting. The character of those to whom it was originally addressed would lead me to speak to proud self-justifiers,

ners, who, like the lukewarm Laodiceans, imagine themselves to be rich and increased with goods, and to stand in need of nothing. Might I stay accurately to examine your supposed righteousnesses, I think I could say several things to make you ashamed of them, and to convince you that they are all but filthy rags. But this would require more time than we have now to spare. All I can do for you is to pray, and beg that others would pray, that God may pity you, and open your eyes.—I hope there are some now hearing me of a different character, to whom I reckon myself more immediately a debtor, I mean those whose eyes are so far opened, as to see that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. It is to you, my dear friends, that our Saviour doth this day address the advice in my text :

‘ I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried  
 ‘ in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and  
 ‘ white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed,  
 ‘ and that the shame of thy nakedness do not  
 ‘ appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eye-  
 ‘ salve, that thou mayest see.’

What have you to object against this advice—Are not these the very things you need; are they not exactly suited to your state and circumstances?—Would you not think yourselves bound to bless God eternally, for giving you such a rich and full supply? I think I may reasonably take all this for granted.—What discourages you then?—You say you are unworthy. I ask you, Where does Christ speak as if he supposed you to be worthy? Were this a secret known only to yourselves, you might indeed have cause to dread a discovery; but the Lord Jesus knew this before you knew it: Nay, if he had not told you of it, I dare venture to affirm you should never have found it out, I mean in this world; for death and judgment will clear up all mistakes. Why then do you make objections where Christ makes none?—Is his honour dearer to you than to himself?—Does he not know how to dispense his mercy till you have taught him? I charge you to beware of such presumptuous conceits. It is *because* you are poor, and blind, and naked, that he counsels you to come to him, for the supplies here offered.

But

But does he not speak of buying, and what price can I offer him for such inestimable blessings? I have already told you what I take to be the meaning of that expression;—but as this objection is of a very deadly nature, and commonly proves one of the strongest bars in mens way to Christ, it is necessary to examine it with some more accuracy. And, first, I must ask those who make the objection, Are you really willing to take these blessings for nothing, if you can get them? Do not answer rashly, for I apprehend there is a secret deceit within you that you are not aware of—Say, Would it not give you a mighty satisfaction, if you could discover something in yourselves that might entitle you to these blessings, or, at least, that might incline or dispose Christ to bestow them upon you? Would it not give you some courage, if you could shed more penitent tears for sin, if you felt more love for God and the Redeemer, or if you were more exact and blameless in your conduct and behaviour? And are you not secretly displeas'd with yourselves, that you cannot attain to these things before you apply to Christ for his aid? If

this is the case, allow me to put your objection in its proper form. It is not, as you apprehend, I have nothing to give to Christ as a price for his benefits; but I have not enough.—My stock is too small to buy such an inheritance; and till it is better improved, it is vain for me to hope that my offer can be accepted. Alas, my brethren, it is plain from this, that pride is at the root of your objection, though it has artfully put on the form of humility; at the bottom you are pleased with the notion of buying, and are only vexed that you have not enough to give; you secretly dream, that by diligence and good management you may at length acquire something that may deserve the favourable regards of the Redeemer: And therefore, once for all, I must tell you, that, notwithstanding your mournful complaints of poverty, you are really far poorer than you suppose yourselves to be. You not only want a price in the mean time, but you shall never be able to find a price that bears the smallest proportion to the blessings you need; and Christ, who shed his blood to purchase these benefits, will never sell them below their value.

due. The truth is, he does not intend to dispose of them in that way. Though he bought them at a high rate, he gives them away freely, and gives them only to those who, disclaiming all merit and worthiness in themselves, are willing to receive them merely as an alms, to which they neither have, nor can have any title.

Let me therefore entreat you to come to him poor and naked as you are. It is his own counsel, and, as I told you, he is the True and Faithful Witness. You may depend upon his word, and shall never have cause to repent your following his advice. Come, then, O sinners, at his call, and believe it, that he is more willing to give you the blessings here spoken of, than you are or can be to ask them from him. You honour the truth of Christ when you obey his summons; whereas you directly give him the lie, and call him a false and flattering witness, when, upon any pretence whatever, you keep at a distance from him, and question his readiness to perform what he hath promised. He not only counsels, but invites; he not only invites, but entreats; and, to remove every ground of

fuspicion or jealousy, he adds his oath to his promise, and to both he superadds his seal, and is now ready to hold it out to you in the holy Sacrament. Let me therefore, once more, beseech you to hearken to his advice. First come to himself by an humble faith; and then come and receive the New Testament in his blood.

As for you who have already been determined, by grace, to listen to the advice of this Faithful Witness, I this day invite you, in his name, to come anew, and draw water out of the wells of salvation. For you, he hath again covered a table in the wilderness, and instituted this ordinance for your spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace. You have formerly tasted that the Lord is gracious, he is now waiting to give you some farther experience of it. Come forward, then, with thankful hearts and enlarged desires. Devise liberal things, for he is a liberal giver. Open your mouths wide, and he will fill them abundantly. Amen.

## S E R M O N IX.

ECCLESIASTES, viii. 13.

*But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he feareth not before God.*

**T**HE promiscuous distribution of good and evil, in the present life, has always tended to weaken the influence of moral and religious motives among mankind. Our minds are so framed, that pleasure or pain, immediately or soon to be experienced, affect them in a much stronger degree, than greater measures of either, removed by distance of future time. There is a prodigious difference between certainty, as the mere object of our understanding, and the strong impression produced by the consideration of those things which are not only certain, but near at hand. The former merely produces assent of the

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mind;

mind; the latter lays hold of the heart, and influences the conduct. Accordingly we find, that all who have aspired to the art of persuasion, in moral or religious discourses, have endeavoured to heighten the influence of distant motives, by placing the objects of them in the strongest light. This may be done either directly, by representing their superior and infinite importance, or implicitly, by lessening our conceptions, and thereby lowering our sollicitude as to the intervening period.

This last is the method adopted by Solomon, in the passage with which the text is connected. In the preceding verse, he had expressed, in the strongest terms, the full assurance he had that it should finally be well with them that fear God. Many, indeed, in the present time, are the afflictions of the righteous. In the world they are generally despised, and reviled, and persecuted. And what is the reason of this! Our Lord tells his disciples the reason, ‘ If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.’ But what is the hatred,  
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the calumny, or persecution of the world, to those whose minds are raised above it, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; whose light affliction, which is but for a moment, works out an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory.

Let us now change the view. The sinner may do evil an hundred times, and as often prosper in his schemes of iniquity; yet, in the midst of all this outward success, he is still the object of pity and compassion, rather than of envy. To real happiness his heart is a stranger; he grasps at enjoyment, and embraces vanity; his days fly away as a shadow; they see no good; and he himself is fast hastening to those regions of darkness, where nothing is heard but the voice of fruitless lamentation, and everlasting despair.

This, it must be confessed, is a gloomy subject; but gloomy as it is, we must not forbear to press it on your attention. The same God who commands us to say to the righteous it shall be well with him, commands us likewise to deliver this awful warning: ‘ It shall not be well with the wicked, ‘ neither shall he prolong his days, which are

‘ as a shadow ; because he feareth not before  
‘ God.’

But, before I proceed to illustrate the threatening in the text, there is a previous point to be settled, without which all that I can say must have very little effect, and that is, who the wicked here spoken of are, who are the persons against whom this threatening is denounced.

Were I, in answer to this inquiry, to begin with describing those gross and flagitious crimes, which the natural conscience of every man abhors, I should only spend your time, and offend your ears to no purpose ; for who is there in all the society of mankind, not to say in a Christian assembly, that will dispute the justice of this appellation as applied to thieves and robbers, oppressors and murderers, blasphemers, false swearers, and open contemners of all laws human and divine. I may safely presume on your assent, that characters such as these, so obnoxious even to human society, may properly be classed among the wicked, against whom the threatening of the text is denounced. I may even take it for granted, that the greater part of  
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my audience will advance a step farther, and permit me to pass the same censure upon those who are guilty of the more prevailing sins of the present time, such as profane swearing, uncleanness, drunkenness, breach of the Lord's Day, and habitual neglect of divine instructions. Thus far, I suppose, we are generally agreed. But if we consult the Scriptures, the only infallible rule of judging, we shall find that the term *wicked* is of a still more extensive signification, and comprehends a great many characters besides those already named. Of this I cannot give you a more convincing proof than by referring you to that plain and instructive parable of the talents, Matth. xxv. 14. There we read of one who digged in the earth and hid his lord's money, and at his return digged it up again, and restored it to him in the same state he got it. In this, according to the general style of judging, there seems to be nothing culpable. The man, though not profitably active, was at least harmless; he took nothing from his master's talent, neither did he put it to any bad use. But what character did his lord give him,  
when

when he came to call for his account. This you may read at the 26th verse.

‘ His Lord said unto him, thou wicked  
 ‘ and slothful servant,’ and, in conformity  
 with this character, he pronounces on him  
 this awful sentence, ‘ Cast ye the unprofit-  
 ‘ able servant into outer darkness, there shall  
 ‘ be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ Hence  
 it appears, that not only the gross and flagi-  
 tious transgressors of God’s law, but even  
 the slothful and careless, who neglect to im-  
 prove the talents committed to them, are rec-  
 koned among the wicked, by the infallible  
 judge, in conformity with that decisive sen-  
 tence of the Apostle James, ‘ To him that  
 ‘ knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to  
 ‘ him it is sin.’ This at once undermines  
 the foundation upon which thousands of de-  
 luded mortals build all their hopes of the di-  
 vine favour and acceptance. In vain, O mis-  
 guided men, will you plead at the Great Day,  
 (even though ye could prove that plea) that  
 ye abused no talent bestowed on you—that  
 you did harm to none of all God’s works.  
 Was it for this negative purpose only, do you  
 think, that your Maker gave you a place in  
 his

his world? Was it for this only, that he conferred the active powers of your nature; that he gave you reason to preside over these powers; and his word to guide that reason? Was it for this only that he placed you in a situation where activity is necessary for your own happiness, and for the happiness of all around you? Is it nothing that your being is a chasm in creation, where infinite wisdom intended that nothing should be void, nothing cumbersome nor unprofitable? The tree that bears no fruit, as well as that whose fruit is pernicious, is cut down and cast into the fire. In like manner, if your lives have not been fruitful in the works of righteousness, if they have not exhibited positive evidences of love to God, and benevolence to men, your abstinence from gross transgressions will be of no avail. You will not, indeed, be ranked with those who proclaim their sins as Sodom; but yet you will be numbered with the wicked, and with them expelled for ever from the presence of the Lord.

But what shall we say of those who are not only harmless, but also good and useful members of human society; decent in their  
conduct,

conduct, upright in their dealings, beneficent and obliging to all around them. Of such persons we are certainly bound both to speak and to think well; where those good fruits appear, we ought to conclude, that the tree which produces them is good likewise. It is a bold and impious invasion of the divine prerogative to judge the hearts of others; and nothing can be more opposite to the spirit of Christianity, than to harbour any secret suspicion of mens inward tempers, when their conduct is proper, inoffensive, and useful.

But if the question be put in another shape, What ought these persons to think of themselves? the word of God obliges me to give another answer.

There we are taught to exercise a perpetual jealousy over ourselves, and to take no credit from particular acts of virtue, if our character be not entirely formed by those principles which it alone inspires. Of these, one of the most commanding is mentioned in the text itself. ‘ It shall not be well with  
‘ the wicked, *because he feareth not before*  
‘ *God.*’ Were all the combinations of language

guage to be studied, it would be impossible to devise an expression more significant than this, or more calculated to discriminate the steady and commanding motives of virtue, from those which are unsound, accidental, and fluctuating.

The openly profane fear not God at all. The unprofitable servant, who buries his talent in the ground, fears him as an austere master, and by that slavish fear is restrained from making the proper improvement of it. The man who aspires only to decency, and outward propriety of conduct, is actuated by a fear which respects sometimes God, sometimes the reproofs of conscience, but most frequently the opinion of his fellow men. In contradistinction to all these partial and inadequate principles, the truly good man *fears before God*. He dreads him not as an enemy, but, conscious of his inspection at all times, he dreads every thing that would make this thought a terror to him. To this decisive test I must therefore lead you. Is the authority of God become the great consideration to which you bend all your sentiments and conduct? Have you been led to renounce the  
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the maxims of the world, and the inclinations of nature, and to make the will of God the standard of all you do, regardless of present danger or advantage. Unless this be the habitual frame of your souls, all your seeming virtues are no better than dead works; ye are still in the bond of iniquity, and have every reason to tremble at the denunciation in the text, ‘ It shall not be well with the  
 ‘ wicked, neither shall he prolong his days,  
 ‘ which are as a shadow, because he feareth  
 ‘ not before God.’

*I/* It cannot be well with the wicked, because the consequences of their own conduct naturally involve misery. Independent of all the sanctions of the divine law, sin is in itself the destroyer of our happiness. There is so much slavery and distraction in obeying our corrupt passions, the consequences are so inconvenient and ruinous, that none ever followed such a course without a secret consciousness of fatal mistake. To be happy, it is necessary that we be at peace with ourselves; But how can the wicked have this peace? Their minds, torn by contending passions, are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest,  
 whose

whose waters cast up mire and dirt. They may indeed dethrone their reason, and trample on their conscience; but yet the voice of these degraded faculties will at times be heard, and even in their scenes of riot and frantic mirth, will, like the hand-writing on the wall of Belsazzar's palace, embitter all their joys. Many sins are destructive of bodily health, as well as of peace of mind. This is confessedly the case with sensuality and intemperance. Others expose men to dreadful hazards, weary them with incessant toils, and at last plunge them in infamy and ruin. 'Come, say they, let us lay wait for blood; let us lurk privily for the innocent; let us swallow them up alive as the grave, and whole as those that go down to the pit; we shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil.' But behold the issue of these criminal projects. 'They lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives. Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon the earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment.

‘ They have sown vanity, and they shall reap  
‘ the whirlwind.’

*2dly*, It cannot be well with the wicked, because they are in a state of distance and alienation from God. The glorious attributes of his nature are to them objects of terror and dismay, and the secret wish of their hearts is, that there were no God. But there is a God, O sinner; a God who hateth wickedness, and who will destroy all the workers of iniquity. He hath bent his bow and made it ready; he hath also prepared for them the instruments of death. And O how hopeless a warfare is it to contend with him! Who ever hardened himself against God and prospered? Is there any strong hold, where the enemies of his government may be safe? Go try the whole extent of creation.—Ascend to Heaven, and he is there in the brightness of his Majesty. Go down to the regions of darkness, and he is there in the severity of his justice. Take the wings of the morning, and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, even there his boundless dominion extends; even there his right hand shall hold thee a prisoner to his vengeance. Listen, O sinner, to the tremendous declaration of this omnipotent omnipresent

present God. ‘ I even I am he, and there is  
 ‘ no God with me. I kill and I make alive,  
 ‘ I wound and I heal, neither is there any  
 ‘ that can deliver out of my hand: For I lift  
 ‘ up my hand to heaven and say, I live for  
 ‘ ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and  
 ‘ mine hand take hold on judgment, I will  
 ‘ render vengeance to mine enemies, and will  
 ‘ reward them that hate me. I will make  
 ‘ mine arrows drunk with blood.’

*3dly*, It cannot be well with the wicked, because they lie under the guilt of all the sins which they have ever committed. A dreadful load! One sin ruined myriads of beings superior to man; How shall they escape, then, who from their youth upwards have drunk iniquity even as the ox drinketh water? It is possible that you may soothe yourselves with the thought of having repented of the grosser sins with which your lives have been stained; you trust that these are forgiven, and presume that a merciful God will overlook the rest. But I must be allowed to inform you, that this is a rash and groundless thought. There is no such thing with God as partial forgiveness. If all your sins are not pardoned, not one of them is; and unless you have

been renewed by the grace and Spirit of God, those sins you committed in your earliest years, are as much in force against you as those of the most recent date you can name. Conversion and pardon are inseparably connected; and it will ever remain a certain truth, that whom God justifies, them he also sanctifies. There is indeed no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; but, on the other hand, these are such as walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.

*4thly*, It cannot be well with the wicked, because, while they remain in this state, nothing they do can please God. I mean not to affirm, that they cannot perform actions materially good, the substance of which is commanded by God. The morality of Christ's religion is so much accommodated to the interest of individuals, and to the good of society, that even they, who have no higher motives, may find it profitable to comply with some of its injunctions: Far less is it my meaning, that it would be better, or as good, for such persons to neglect or disobey these injunctions.

injunctions. But my meaning is, that there are so many defects, and so much unfoundness of motive in their best actions, that God can have no delight in them, such as he has in the obedience of his own people, who are reconciled to him by the great Mediator.

They cannot so far please God as to render their persons acceptable to him; nor have they any promise that this partial obedience of theirs shall be recompensed with any favour or reward. The truth of these observations is confirmed by a multitude of passages in Scripture. There we are told that the thoughts of the wicked are abominable to him; that the plowing of the wicked is sin; that the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; yea, he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer, saith Solomon, shall be an abomination unto God. And how can it be well with the man, whose whole life is a perpetual offence to the God that made him? Consider this, ye that now despise reproof, trample on the blood of Christ, and resist the motions of his Spirit. In vain do you rest on the favourable parts of your character, as a compensation for this

ungrateful abuse of the divine goodness and long suffering. In the sight of men, indeed, this balance may be of some avail to you; but God seeth not as man seeth; in his sight your whole character is depraved, and every part of your conduct offensive. I shall only add, in the

*5th* and *last* place, that if you die in this state, your perdition is inevitable. ‘Except a man be born again,’ saith our Lord, ‘he cannot see the kingdom of God.’—Verily, ‘Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ These passages are plain and decisive; and I have selected them, among innumerable others to the same purpose, for this reason, that they were uttered by the firmest and tenderest friend of the human race, the truth of whose warnings we can have no reason to doubt.

In reviewing what has been said, the impression left is undoubtedly gloomy; and nothing but a sense of duty could have prevailed on me to deliver so harsh a message. But that watchman would be very unfaithful to his

his trust, who would not call the alarm of fire, because of the unpleasant sound it has in men's ears. I have not been sternly delivering truths in which I have no concern myself. We are all embarked in the voyage of life upon the same conditions. These conditions I have endeavoured to set before you, according to that commandment of God, ' Say ye  
 ' to the righteous, it shall be well with him,  
 ' for he shall eat the fruit of his doings; but  
 ' wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him,  
 ' neither shall he prolong his days, which are  
 ' as a shadow, because he feareth not before  
 ' God.' Knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Lord, I have been endeavouring to persuade you to fly from the wrath to come.

The way to escape all this misery is patent, even to the chief of sinners. The door of mercy is open. God is seated on a throne of grace, ready to receive every humble penitent; and this is his call to the sons of men,  
 ' Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die.—Seek  
 ' ye the Lord while he may be found, call  
 ' upon him while he is near.—Let the wicked for-  
 ' sake his way, and the unrighteous  
 ' man his thoughts, and let him return unto

‘ the Lord, and he will have mercy on him,  
‘ and to our God, for he will abundantly  
‘ pardon.—Incline your ear and come unto  
‘ me, hear and your souls shall live; and I  
‘ will make with you an everlasting covenant,  
‘ even the sure mercies of David.’ Amen.

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## S E R M O N X.

REVELATIONS, ii. 5.

*Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

**T**HESSE are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ to the church of Ephesus. They contain a call to repentance and reformation, with a severe and terrible threatning in case of disobedience. In the second and third verses, we have an acknowledgment of what was good in that church, ‘ I know thy works, ‘ and thy labour, and thy patience, and how ‘ thou canst not bear them which are evil; ‘ and thou hast tried them which say they ‘ are Apostles, and are not, and hast found ‘ them liars; and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast labour-  
‘ ed,

‘ ed, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless,’ says he, in the 4th verse, ‘ I have somewhat ‘ against thee, because thou hast left thy first ‘ love.’ Their affection was cooled, their zeal was abated, they were become more remiss and lukewarm in the duties of religion. Now, this our Saviour could not bear, he therefore calls them to remember their first estate, to consider their present degenerate condition, to mourn over it, and to rise from it by a speedy repentance and reformation; and to give this summons the greater efficacy, he threatens them with the removal of the gospel from them, if they did not repent. ‘ I ‘ will come unto thee quickly, and remove ‘ thy candlestick out of his place, except thou ‘ repent.’

Many useful observations might be made from this passage, as, *first*, That our Lord Jesus Christ takes special notice of those to whom the gospel is sent. His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good; but he walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and carefully observes the improvement which men make of this precious light. This teaches us what manner of persons we ought

ought to be. We are placed here, as it were on a theatre, and act in the immediate view of our King and Judge: Yea he hath in a manner entrusted us with his glory, and called the world to take notice of us, as the persons by whom he expects to be honoured, and therefore our behaviour cannot be indifferent to him. He may wink at others, but cannot wink at us. The husbandman is not dishonoured by the unfruitfulness of a wild tree, upon which he has bestowed no culture; but the barrenness of what is planted in his garden, or inclosed field, reflects upon himself, and therefore he cannot be unconcerned about that, but must vindicate his honour upon it, by cutting it down, and casting it out as a cumberer of the ground.

*Secondly,* We may observe, that not only gross apostacy, but even the smallest decays among his people, are highly offensive unto him. This church had many good things among them, and after the commendation that was given them in the second and third verses, one would be ready to put the question, What lack they yet? But our Lord remarks the coldness of their hearts, and resents that  
inward

inward and secret declension from their former love and zeal, and threatens them with swift destruction if they did not repent. O how does this magnify God's patience towards us; and what cause have we to tremble and be afraid of his judgments, seeing we have not only fallen from our first love, but by gross and open acts of enmity, have made it extremely doubtful, whether there be any remains of love abiding with us at all. But, without insisting upon these, my design is to consider this threatening separately by itself— And my method shall be,

- I. To shew that God may be provoked by the sins of a people, to remove the gospel from them.
- II. I shall represent to you the terribleness of this judgment. And,
- III. Direct you to the proper use of this awful subject.

In the Scriptures we have many comfortable promises of the churches stability; it is built upon a rock, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. It was Christ's  
 promise

promise to his Apostles, ‘ Lo I am with you ‘ always, even unto the end of the world ;’ not with their persons, for these were soon to be removed out of the world by death ; but with their doctrine, which was to endure throughout all generations ; so that we have the fullest assurance, that the Zion of God, or the universal church, shall never perish ;— that the light of the gospel shall never be extinguished ; but that the King of Zion shall always have subjects to serve him in some corner of the earth or other. But though the gospel shall never be removed out of the world altogether, yet it may be removed from particular places. The candlestick is a moveable thing, and not an entailed inheritance.

The Jews are an eminent instance of this. Never was a nation so highly favoured as they. To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God ; and the promises ; theirs were the fathers, and of them as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. They were God’s chosen people, his peculiar treasure,

sure, his first born, and his spouse; for by these honourable titles were they long distinguished from the rest of the world. Nor were they only distinguished by titles, but actually blessed with all the privileges which these titles imported. God was indeed a father and husband unto them; he cherished them in his bosom, and employed his almighty power for their preservation. He conducted their arms, and dictated their laws; he formed their state, and was present among them by a visible glory, and established a method of correspondence, by which they might have constant access to him for counsel and direction in every case of difficulty. Never had any people such illustrious displays of the divine providence in their favours. Some nations have had a long track of prosperity, a series of lucky accidents, as it were, by the help of which they have grown up to a very flourishing condition; but the various steps of their advancement were visible, and easy to be accounted for, and were nothing more extraordinary than a plentiful crop after a favourable seed-time and harvest; or the riches of a skilful and industrious merchant. But

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it was not so with the nation of the Jews; their prosperity was the admiration of all that beheld it, and forced them to acknowledge, that the Lord was with them of a truth. God brought them out of Egypt by a high hand and an outstretched arm; the sea opened a passage for their retreat, and overwhelmed their enemies; bread was given them from heaven, so that man did eat angels food; and the flinty rock yielded them water to quench their thirst. At the prayer of Joshua, the sun stood still; and at the same time God slew his enemies before him with hail-stones from heaven, and gave his people a miraculous and complete victory over them. And after they were put in possession of the promised land, they did not grow up like other states; they were often times brought so low, that they seemed past recovery, and as often did God interpose for their relief; and the various changes they underwent were so sudden and surprising, as made it evident to themselves, and all about them, that their affairs were conducted not by the skill and strength of men, but by the immediate hand of God, who, by his irresistible power governs

verns all creatures and things, so that none can stay his hand, or say unto him what doest thou. Yet notwithstanding all these titles, and privileges, and providences, whereby God distinguished them in such a remarkable manner, they are now pulled up by the roots, abandoned by God, and despised among men. No spiritual dew falls upon those mountains of Gilboa. Those that were as pleasant to God, as the grapes in the wilderness to a thirsty traveller, are now of as little regard as the heath or the bramble. Of a tender father, he is become their enraged enemy; and flings vengeance down upon those heads, which before he crowned with mercy. He caused the land in which he planted them, by a series of miracles, to spue them out because of their sins; and now they wander as miserable vagabonds over the face of the world, a standing monument of God's righteous judgment, and a sad proof that spiritual privileges are not entailed to any nation; but that God may be provoked, by the sins of a people, to remove their candlestick out of his place, and punish them with darkness, who  
would

would not walk in the light of it whilst they enjoyed it:

The seven churches of Asia, mentioned in this and the following chapter, are another instance of this. These had their day, but are now benighted; the judgments threatened in these gracious epistles, which were directed to them, have been long ago inflicted. The banners of a blasphemous impostor have long triumphed over the standard of the gospel. Nor is the once famous church of Rome a great deal better; for though the gospel is still professed and honoured by them in appearance, yet the light of it is so much obscured, and buried amidst the rubbish of idolatrous opinions and practices, that it is scarce discernible; and without breach of charity we may say of them, that God hath given them up to strong delusions, to believe a lie, so that they have all the marks of a people whom God hath abandoned, though wrath be not as yet come upon them to the uttermost. By these examples we see, that the gospel is not the inheritance of any particular people, but that it frequently has been, and therefore may still be forfeited, and that

God may be provoked, by the sins of those who enjoy the light of it, to strip them of all their privileges, by removing the candlestick out of his place. Let us now proceed, in the

II. Place, to consider the greatness of this punishment. And if we view it aright, we shall soon be convinced, that a more terrible judgment cannot be inflicted upon any people or nation. What can be more terrible than famine.—Parents have been forced, against all the ties of natural affection, to devour their own children; and children to feed upon the flesh of their parents. The extremity of hunger hath reconciled very delicate people to things that are most loathsome and nauseous, carrion, dung, and vermine of all sorts; yet this is accounted a small judgment when compared with the other, Amos, viii. 11. ‘ Behold the days come saith the Lord, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord.’ The want of spiritual food is so much worse than the want of natural food, as the soul is better

better than the body ; the one makes the body weak, the other starves the soul, and leaves it both weak and wicked ; the one may be a means to make us seek the Lord, but the other leaves us in gross darkness, without either help or hope. The gospel is the sun that enlightens the mind, the rain that waters the heart ; it is that divine seed by which the quickening spirit renews the soul, and implants a principle of spiritual life, which shall issue in a glorious and eternal one. By this our souls are refined, and our lusts consumed ; without this we can have no prospect of a world to come, nor any knowledge of the way that leads to it ; for life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel, and by it only we are told, that God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses ; and therefore the want of it must be the sum of all misery, and infinitely worse than any other calamity we can either feel or fear in this world. God may take notice of a people under the sharpest afflictions, but when he takes away his word, then he knows them no longer ; then all gracious correspondence or intercourse is bro-

ken up. This, O this, is the very dregs of vengeance! Yea, when the gospel departs from a people, all other blessings commonly depart with it. This is the charter of all our privileges, both spiritual and temporal; and therefore in losing it, we lose all that depends upon it; at least we forfeit our title, and any outward mercies that are continued with us, are only like food and raiment to a condemned criminal, which the King's clemency allows him, till the fatal sentence be executed upon him.

The gospel is not only the glory, but the strength of a nation; when it departs, God ceases to be their protector. The flourishing condition of the seven churches soon withered, when the candlestick was removed; and their deplorable and abject state ever since, even with respect to external enjoyments, and worldly advantages, is a melancholy proof that the gospel does not take flight alone, but is attended with every other thing that contributes to the glory or happiness of a people.

Thus

Thus have I represented to you the terribleness of this judgment: And now I come to point out your concern in this subject, and to direct you to the proper improvement of it. And if these things be so, Have not we in these lands great reason to fear, that our iniquities may provoke the Lord to inflict this punishment upon us? Are we better than Ephesus, or the other churches of Asia? Are our privileges greater or better secured than theirs were? yet their candlestick has been long removed, and who dare affirm that ours may not be removed likewise? My brethren, I have no design to alarm you with groundless fears; but my duty as a watchman obliges me to blow the trumpet when I see danger approaching; and that I may give it a distinct sound, I shall briefly unfold to you the grounds of my apprehension of approaching danger, in these following remarks: And,

1<sup>st</sup>, Is it not evident that vice and immorality have grown up to an amazing height amongst us? Do not many proclaim their sins as Sodom, and hide them not? yea, Do not many glory in their shame, and count it their honour to excel in some branch of wic-

kedness or other? I do not aggravate the charge; every one's observation must convince him of the truth of it. Now, What must be the fruit of this? Hear what God says by his prophet, Joel, iii. 13. 'Put ye in  
' the sickle, for the harvest is ripe, the press  
' is full, the fat overflows; for their wicked-  
' ness is great.' I do not say we have just come this length, that we are already arrived at a fulness of iniquity; but surely we have for a long time been advancing towards it by very hasty steps. And this, I think, is one reasonable ground of fear.

*2dly*, Is there not a visible contempt of the blessed gospel? Are not the ordinances of religion slighted and despised? yea, is it not become fashionable among many, to reject the whole of Revelation as a cunningly devised fable, and to use all their influence to profelyte the more simple and unthinking to their opinion? Has not Deism, which began at court in King Charles II.'s reign, been still descending through all the inferior ranks, till now it has got low enough? And what does this presage? The Gadareans besought Christ to depart from their coasts, and got their request,

quest. The gospel is of too much worth to be always exposed to the injuries of men, and forced upon a people against their will. When children throw a precious jewel in the dirt, What can be expected, but that their father should take it from them, and lay it in another place, and punish them too for their folly and ingratitude? A

3d Sign of approaching danger is the small success which accompanies the preaching of the gospel, even among those who profess to believe it. How few converts are born into the church? Is it not visible, that numbers who attend upon ordinances are still lying in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity? How few are seriously inquiring after the way to Zion with their faces thitherward? And is not this, too, a presage of a departing gospel, when God ceases to pour oil into the lamp, to accompany the ordinances of religion with the influences of his Spirit? Surely we have reason to fear, that he intends to remove the candlestick to some other place, and give it to those who will value it more, and make better use of it than we have done. A

*4th* Ground of fear is the present divided state of our church. Union is the strength of the religious, as well as of the civil society; for a house divided against itself cannot stand. It is a weighty saying of one upon this head, That when children fall out and fight about the candle, the parents come and take it away, and leave them to decide their differences in the dark. We may justly fear that God will take away that light which we abuse in quarrelling, instead of walking and working by it. Add to all these, in the

*5th* Place, the threatenng aspect of divine providence. The success of our enemies abroad, and the bold attempt, which is still carrying on, against our religion and liberties at home, and then judge whether there be not sufficient grounds of fear. ‘ Will a lion  
 ‘ roar in the forest when he hath no prey?  
 ‘ Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he  
 ‘ have taken nothing? Can a bird fall in a  
 ‘ snare upon the earth, where no gin is for  
 ‘ him? Shall one take up a snare from the  
 ‘ earth, and have taken nothing at all? Shall  
 ‘ a trumpet be blown in the city, and the  
 ‘ people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in

‘ a city, and the Lord hath not done it?  
‘ The lion hath roared, Who will not fear?  
‘ The Lord God hath spoken, Who can but  
‘ prophecy?’ My brethren, God has been speaking to us in a very awful manner for these six months past; and that we might not mistake his voice, most of the events that have fallen out in that space of time, have been altogether surprising and unexpected. Our enemies themselves were amazed at their success, and ascribed it to the immediate hand of God, which favoured their enterprize; and the hand of God has been no less remarkably displayed in our benign deliverance. The retreat of the rebels, immediately after a victory, without facing an army they had so lately overcome, was so contrary to the general opinion, that I believe the wisest heads were afraid of some cunning artifice, some deep laid plot to draw our men into a snare, from which they should not easily escape. In a word, man’s part in this whole affair has been so small and inconsiderable, that it is evidently the Lord’s own doing; and though he has employed instruments both to distress and relieve us, yet he has done it in such a sovereign

reign manner, that he seems to have used them upon no other design, but only to convince us that he can work without them. I confess, my brethren, the care which God has taken to make himself observable in the conduct of these occurrences, is one of the principal grounds of my fears at this time; nor are my fears a whit lessened by the late favourable dispensation. I look upon it, indeed, as an intimation, that he who is a God of judgment is also a God of mercy; and that, notwithstanding all our past provocations, he is yet willing to be reconciled to us, upon the terms of the gospel; and therefore I view it in the light of an encouragement to repentance, but not at all as a sign that God's anger is turned away from us, or a security that our danger is over. No, my brethren, the sun rose upon Sodom the morning of that very day in which it was consumed by fire from heaven. We have got a breathing time, a respite from judgment, but not a perfect deliverance; and if we do not improve the day of our visitation, this mixture of goodness with severity makes it only the more probable that the last exercise of God's patience is at

at hand, and that the things which belong to our peace are in the greatest danger of being hid from our eyes.

Thus then you see what grounds there are to fear, that the dreadful judgment threatened in the text may be inflicted upon us; and this, I hope, will dispose us all to listen to the exhortation here given us, ‘Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works.’

This is the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the only way to prevent the ruin of a sinful people. The substance of this exhortation I have frequently pressed upon you, and therefore I shall not now enlarge upon it, and every thing I have just now delivered to you may serve as motives to induce you to comply with it. The candlestick may be removed from you. This deprivation of the gospel is the most terrible of all God’s judgments; and as our sins deserve it, so God by his providence has actually been threatening us with it. O then let us be awakened from our security, let us value the gospel dispensation, and improve it to the obtaining a gospel nature. Let us not loiter while the sun shines,

shines, lest we be benighted. It will not stand still at our pleasure, but will go its course according to the command of its governor, and listens not to the follies of men, nor tarries for our delays. Let us then stir up ourselves to call upon our Lord, who is the Lord of Zion, and the protector and safeguard of our Jerufalem. Let us plead with him, as the disciples that were going to Emmaus, ‘ Lord abide with us, for the evening begins to come, and the day is far spent.’ Our Saviour did so, and gave them his blessing. He may do so with us likewise; he may return with a rich blessing to our land and church, and abide with us and our posterity till the day of glory break, and all the shadows fly away. Amen.

S E R-

## S E R M O N XI.

2. CHRONICLES, v. 13. 14.

*It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord, and when they lift up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals, and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever, that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord: So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.*

**T**HE day of Pentecost excepted, when the Holy Ghost made a visible descent upon the Apostles of our Lord, I look upon this to have been the brightest day of heaven upon earth that ever the church of God was favoured with. It is impossible to conceive the

the joy, the wonder, the ecstasy of these devout worshippers, when they beheld the cloud, that well known symbol of the Divine presence, and saw the temple filled with his glory. Solomon himself, as we learn from the 18th verse of the following chapter, was so overpowered with this extraordinary manifestation, that he made a sudden pause even after he had begun to pray; and, like one doubtful whether he should believe the testimony of his own senses, abruptly asks the question; ‘But, will God in very deed dwell  
‘with men on the earth? Behold! heaven,  
‘and the heaven of heavens. cannot contain  
‘thee, how much less this house that I have  
‘built!’

It appears, from the last chapter of the book of Exodus, that, when the tabernacle was first erected in the wilderness, God was pleased to take visible possession of it, in a way similar to what is here recorded; and the effects (though not precisely the same) were very much akin to those I have now read to you: For we are there told, that Moses, the man of God, was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon,

thereon, and the glory of the Lord had filled the tabernacle : But here the cloud not only filled the tabernacle, but the whole temple ; and the Divine presence was displayed with such glory and majesty, that the priests who burnt incense at the golden altar, were obliged, at least for some time, to intermit the service. They could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.

I suppose I need scarcely observe to you, that such pompous and visible manifestations of the Divine presence are not to be expected in gospel days. The darkness of the former dispensation required those external aids, and rendered them not only desirable, but useful and necessary ; but now, that the darkness is dispelled, and the day-spring from on high hath visited us ;—the great objects of faith being freed from the thick veil of types and shadows, penetrate the mind without the assistance of our bodily senses, and make a deeper and more lasting impression upon the believing soul, than the most splendid scenes the eye could behold.

Zion's

Zion's glory doth not now consist in outward pomp and magnificence, but in the spiritual though invisible presence of her King, according to his own gracious promise, 'Lo  
' I am with you always, even unto the end  
' of the world;' and, 'where two or three  
' are gathered together in my name, there am  
' I in the midst of them.' When a divine power accompanies the ordinances of religion; when these waters of the sanctuary are impregnated with a healing and quickening virtue; when the souls of believers are enlightened and purified, revived and comforted, by the use of those means which Christ hath appointed, then is the temple filled with his glory; and there is no need of any visible cloud to convince the devout worshipper that his Lord is with him.

It has long been lamented, (would to God there was less cause for it), that this gracious presence of our Redeemer is sensibly withdrawn from our public assemblies. We have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us, what work the Lord did in their days, in the times of old; how his steps of majesty have been seen in the sanctuary, and his arm  
revealed

revealed by its glorious effects, turning the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, enriching and beautifying the souls of his own people with righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

But alas, How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed? These blessed fruits of gospel ordinances are rarely to be seen in our day, and therefore is just ground for that mournful complaint, ‘The bellows  
‘are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire,  
‘the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked  
‘are not plucked away from their wicked-  
‘ness.’ Few, comparatively speaking, are now converted by the means of grace. And even among the few who have a name to live, the decayed and languishing state of vital Christianity, is too observable to need any proof or illustration.

To what cause shall we impute this?—Is God’s arm shortened, that it cannot save; or his ear heavy, that he cannot hear? Is his mercy clean gone for ever; doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious; hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?—No, God is unchangeably

the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever, without any variableness or shadow of turning. He is the rock, his work is perfect, and all his ways are judgment; a God of truth and inviolable fidelity. The blame, my brethren, lies at our own door.—Our iniquities have separated between us and our God, and withhold good things from us. We do not cry to him with our hearts; we do not stir up ourselves to call upon God; our prayers are cold and lifeless; our praises languish and die on our lips; we rush upon ordinances without any serious preparation, and are neither suitably concerned to obtain the divine presence, nor duly affected when we miss it.

That this is too frequently the case will not, cannot be denied. Our own observation and experience must convince us of the truth of it. But may I not be allowed to hope that some, nay that many, have come up to this solemnity with longing desires to behold and admire the beauty of the Lord, and to feel the power of his grace in the sanctuary. May I not hope, that there is a goodly number in this large assembly, who have been pleading, like Moses, in their secret retirements,

ments, ' I beseech thee, O Lord, shew me  
' thy glory.'

Well, then, to such the passage I am now to discourse upon affords matter of useful and seasonable instruction, as it not only relates an extraordinary manifestation of the divine glory to his ancient church, but likewise informs us how the worshippers were employed at the time when that extraordinary manifestation was made. And I think the inference is perfectly just and natural, That if we desire and expect to share in their privilege, we ought, in so far as the difference of our circumstances will permit, to follow their example, and do what they did.

' It came even to pass, as the trumpeters  
' and singers were as one, to make one sound  
' to be heard in praising and thanking the  
' Lord, and when they lift up their voice  
' with the trumpets and cymbals, and instru-  
' ments of music, and praised the Lord, say-  
' ing, For he is good, for his mercy en-  
' dureth for ever, that then the house was  
' filled with a cloud, even the house of the  
' Lord, so that the priests could not stand to  
' minister by reason of the cloud; for the

‘glory of the Lord had filled the house of  
‘God.’

Where you may observe, in the

I. Place, that the glory of God began to appear when the assembly were employed in praise and thanksgiving. This is a striking circumstance, and deserves our peculiar attention. Much time had been spent in solemn duties of another kind. Numerous and costly sacrifices had been offered up, as we read in the 6th verse of this chapter, even sheep and oxen that could not be told for multitudes. But these ritual parts of worship were all concluded before the cloud entered into the Temple. God delayed to honour them with this token of his favour, till the spiritual and heavenly exercise of praise was begun. This is by far the most acceptable service we can be engaged in, ‘Who so offer-  
‘eth praise,’ says God, ‘glorifieth me.’—David knew this when he said, Psalm lxix. 30, 31, &c. ‘I will praise the name of God  
‘with a song, and will magnify him with  
‘thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord  
‘better than an ox or bullock that hath horn or  
‘hoof.’

‘ hoof.’ Praise honours God, and therefore he puts a distinguishing honour upon this duty. Prayer is an expression of our indigence and weakness. Thanksgiving expresseth our relish of the sweetness of benefits received; but praise rises above all selfish regards, and directly terminates on the greatness and amiableness of God himself. He loves our prayers, he loves our penitential tears and groans; but nothing pleases him so much as the cheerful adoration and praise of his people. Nay, penitential tears are no otherwise valuable than as they purge our eyes from the filth of sin, that we may behold more clearly the loveliness of God, and give him that glory which is due to his name. All the other duties of devotion are only means of preparation for this sublime exercise. The habitations of the blessed continually resound with the high praises of God. There the most perfect creatures, in their most perfect state, have this for their constant unwearied employment, ‘ they rest not day nor night, saying, holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.’

We are too backward, my brethren, to this heavenly exercise, and perhaps that is one reason why we enjoy so little of heaven upon earth. Did we praise God more, he would give us greater cause to praise him; but this we seldom think of. We beg hard for relief when we feel our necessities; but alas, how slowly do we return to give glory to God. Let me therefore entreat you, in all your addresses to the throne of grace, to give praise and thanksgiving their due proportion. In days of humiliation, or in some special cases of distress, our sins and our dangers may have the greater share; but ordinarily, as much of our time and thoughts should be employed in the humble and thankful adoration of the divine greatness and goodness, as is spent in confessing our sins, or begging those supplies which our wants require. That excellent model of devotion which Christ has left to his church lays a solid foundation for this remark. It both begins and ends with adoration; and of the six petitions which make up the body of the prayer, three directly relate to the advancement of God's glory. Nay, these three are first in order, and we are taught

taught to pray that God's name may be hallowed, his kingdom come, and his will done, on earth as it is in heaven, before we ask any thing for ourselves in particular. Would we then feel the divine presence, would we see the glory of God in his Sanctuary, let us address ourselves to this high and heavenly work. The occasion of our meeting gives us a fair invitation to it. The great object which this day presents to us, is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. We are to behold Christ in the holy sacrament, evidently set forth as crucified before our eyes. — And can we refrain from adoration and praise, whilst we contemplate him who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person? Should we not rejoice and give thanks, when we are called to commemorate the unspeakable gift of God to men? Every Lord's day bespeaks our praise and thanksgiving; but the peculiar language of a communion Sabbath is evidently this, ' Let Israel rejoice in  
' him that made him; Let the children of  
' Zion be joyful in their King. Praise ye  
' the Lord, for it is good to sing praises to our

‘ God ; for it is pleasant, and praise is come-  
‘ ly.’

II. It deserves our notice, that the subject of praise, which God honoured with this token of his acceptance, was his own goodness and everlasting mercy ; and this, my brethren, is a most encouraging circumstance, for it plainly enough tells us, that God is best pleased with our praises, when we adore and celebrate those perfections of his nature, which dispose him to pity the miserable, and have the kindest aspect towards the children of men. The song that the priests were singing when the cloud entered into the Temple, had none of that rhetorical pomp which a cold heart may borrow from a warm imagination ; it consisted of a few plain but gracious words, ‘ The Lord is good, and his mercy endureth  
‘ for ever.’ And whilst they sung this plain and artless song, God made a sudden display of his glory, and caused them to feel the happy effects of that goodness which they praised. And shall not their success encourage us to follow their example ? They adored and celebrated the divine goodness, when the Ark  
was

was brought into the Temple, which was only a typical representation of the Messiah who was to come; And shall we need any sollicitation to adopt their song, who know that the mercy promised to the fathers, the consolation of Israel, is already come? especially whilst we attend upon that sacred ordinance, which is both a solemn commemoration of his past sufferings, and a pledge of his return to complete our salvation. Here, indeed, we have the brightest display of the goodness and everlasting mercy of God. ‘ God so loved the world, that he gave his  
‘ only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth  
‘ in him might not perish, but have eternal  
‘ life; for God sent his Son into the world,  
‘ not to condemn the world, but that the  
‘ world through him might be saved.’ Our great Redeemer is the liveliest image of infinite goodness, the messenger of the most unsearchable astonishing love, the purchaser of the most inestimable benefits that ever were revealed to the sons of men. ‘ Greater love  
‘ than this hath no man, that a man lay down  
‘ his life for his friend; but God commen-  
‘ deth his love towards us, in that whilst we  
‘ were

‘ were yet finners Christ died for us.’ Can we doubt of the divine goodness, after this costly expression of it? ‘ 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?’ Behold, likewise, this adorable perfection shining through the whole of that gracious covenant, whereof this holy sacrament is the external seal. There you may see such sure, such great and wonderful mercies, freely given out to a world of finners, as may remove all your suspicions of the divine goodness and mercy, and afford you constant matter of praise and thanksgiving. There you may see how unwilling God is that finners should perish. There you may see an act of pardon and oblivion, granted upon the easy and reasonable condition of a believing, penitent, and thankful acceptance. The sins that men have been committing for many years together, their wilful, heinous, aggravated sins, you may there see pardoned, by ascendant unwearièd mercy; the enemies of God reconciled to him; condemned rebels saved from hell, nay brought into his family, and made his sons. O what comfortable discoveries

coveries are these! The Old Testament saints saw them darkly through a veil, whereas we behold them with open face. God appears in his Son and covenant, to be not only good, but love itself. Let us then adore him in this amiable character; let us give him the glory of all his perfections; but especially let us praise him with thankful hearts, ‘ because he is good, and his mercy endureth ‘ for ever.’ A

III. Circumstance in the text, which claims our attention, is the seriousness and fervour of this devout assembly. It is said, that they lifted up their voice and praised the Lord. Here they exerted their whole strength and activity, as if they had been ambitious to spend themselves in this heavenly employment. Would we then this day obtain a token of the divine acceptance, let us learn, from their example, to seek it by a fervent and lively devotion. Great is the Lord, says David, and therefore greatly to be praised. Accordingly, when he enters upon this important duty, in Psalms ciii. he begins with a solemn address to his own soul, ‘ Bless the  
‘ Lord,

‘ Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me  
 ‘ bless his holy name.’ The devotion of the  
 soul is the soul of devotion ; it is the praise  
 and homage of the heart which God requires ;  
 if that is withheld, we have nothing else to  
 offer him that is worthy his regard. We are  
 commanded to love the Lord our God with  
 all our heart, with all our soul, and with all  
 our strength, and with all our mind ; and  
 what is the measure of our love ought like-  
 wise to be the measure of our praise ; for it  
 is as impossible to exceed in the one as in the  
 other. As we cannot love him too much, so  
 neither can we praise him too highly. His  
 greatness and his goodness infinitely surpass  
 all that our minds can conceive, or our tongues  
 express. But there is yet a

IV. Circumstance in the text, which de-  
 serves our particular notice upon this occa-  
 sion, namely, the harmony and unanimity of  
 these antient worshippers. ‘ They were all  
 ‘ as one, and made one sound to be heard in  
 ‘ praising and thanking the Lord.’ The im-  
 portance of this circumstance will appear in  
 a stronger light, if we compare the passage  
 now

now before us, with that extraordinary manifestation on the day of Pentecost, which is related in the 2d chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. There we are told, that when the ‘ Apostles were all with one accord in one ‘ place, suddenly there came a sound from ‘ heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it ‘ filled all the house where they were sitting.’ Every one will be sensible, that there is a very striking resemblance between these two illustrious events; and I cannot help thinking, that the oneness and harmony of the worshippers, on both these occasions, is mentioned with peculiar emphasis, as a distinguishing characteristic of those religious assemblies, which God delights to honour with his presence.

We are told, in the cxxxiii. Psalm, that where brethren dwell together in unity, there God commandeth the blessing; and our blessed Lord lays such stress upon unity of affection among his disciples, that he makes it an essential qualification of an acceptable worshipper; nay, he tells us that where this is wanting, the person is disqualified for performing any service that is pleasing to God.

Matth.

Matth. v. 23, 24. ‘ If thou bring thy gift to  
 ‘ the altar, and there rememberest that thy  
 ‘ brother hath ought against thee, leave there  
 ‘ thy gift before the altar, and go thy way,  
 ‘ first be reconciled to thy brother, and then  
 ‘ come and offer thy gift.’ If this doctrine  
 of brotherly love has not an obvious foundation  
 in the text, yet I can hardly think I need make  
 any apology for mentioning it, seeing it has  
 a broad foundation in other passages of Scrip-  
 ture, and is strictly connected with the great  
 ordinance before us. The sacrament of the  
 Supper is not only a solemn commemoration  
 of our Saviour’s death, and of his wonderful  
 love to sinners of mankind, but was likewise in-  
 tended to be a badge of love and union among  
 his disciples. Of old, they who feasted upon  
 the same sacrifice laid aside all enmity, and  
 professed to be knit together in love and  
 friendship. In like manner, all who partake  
 of the great gospel sacrifice in the holy sacra-  
 ment, are supposed to be members of one  
 body, united under one head, our Lord Jesus  
 Christ. ‘ The cup of blessings which we  
 ‘ bless,’ says the Apostle, ‘ is it not the com-  
 ‘ munion of the blood of Christ; the bread  
 ‘ which

\* which we break, is it not the communion  
' of the body of Christ ; for we being many  
' are one bread and one body, for we are all  
' partakers of that one bread.' It would be  
monstrous to see one member of the natural  
body hurting and destroying another, the  
mouth devouring the hand, or the hand pluck-  
ing out the eye ; it is no less monstrous and  
unnatural, for one member of Christ's mysti-  
cal body to be at variance with another—to  
see those who partake of the Table of the  
Lord, at the same time partaking of the table  
of devils, by entertaining hatred and malice  
in their hearts, by doing, or purposing to do,  
or even by wishing any hurt to their brethren  
in Christ. Would we then obtain the divine  
presence and blessing on this solemn occasion ;  
do we expect or desire that the King should  
sit at his own table this day, and impart to us  
the fruits of his favour and love, let us be  
one among ourselves ; let every bitter passion  
be put away ; and let us put on, as the elect  
of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mer-  
cies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meek-  
ness and long-suffering, forbearing one ano-  
ther, even as we look for forgiveness through  
the

the merits of Jesus, remitting to others their hundred pence, whilst we plead with God for the discharge of our ten thousand talents.

But the oneness here spoken of seems more immediately to respect their harmonious agreement in the great subject of their praise. They made one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord, saying, 'For he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever.' And, when they thus concurred with heart and voice in extolling the goodness and mercy of God, 'it came even to pass,' says the sacred historian, 'that the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.' That agreement in prayer has a mighty efficacy appears from that gracious promise of our Lord, Mat. xviii. 19. 'Again, I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.' And my text affords a convincing proof, that agreement in praise has an equal efficacy to bring the glory of God into the assemblies of  
his

his people. We may at least take encouragement from it to make the experiment. We have been asking the Divine presence by prayer; let us now go a little farther, and seek it in praise and thanksgiving. The EUCHARIST was the ancient name of the Sacrament, which tells us that the sacramental devotions of the primitive church chiefly consisted in those laudable exercises I am now recommending; and certainly their example should have considerable weight with us.

Let none say I am a guilty, depraved creature, and therefore groans, and tears, and sorrowful lamentations, become me better than the voice of praise; for, if you are penitent believing sinners, if, despairing of relief from any other quarter, you have fled to Christ, as your city of refuge, and taken sanctuary in his atoning blood and sacrifice,—praise is not only lawful, but highly becoming, nay a necessary part of your present duty;—the design of your redemption, the tenor of the Gospel Covenant, the glorious privileges to which you stand entitled, loudly demand this grateful return. ‘We are built up,’ says Peter, ‘a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to of-

‘fer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God  
 ‘by Jesus Christ;’ 1. Peter, ii. 5. : And, that  
 praise is one of these spiritual sacrifices, ap-  
 pears from the 9th verse, ‘Ye are a chosen  
 ‘generation, a royal priesthood, an holy na-  
 ‘tion, a peculiar people, that ye should shew  
 ‘forth the praises of him who hath called you  
 ‘out of darkness into his marvellous light.’

But alas, says one, What is all this to me !  
 My harp must still hang upon the willows ;  
 for how shall I, a wretched captive, presume  
 to sing the songs of Zion ? No evidences of  
 grace are legible in my heart. Grief and fear  
 have so thoroughly possessed it, that the love  
 of God can find no room. How then, or to  
 what purpose, should I lift up my voice, whilst  
 my soul is cast down and disquieted within  
 me ! Now, to such I would answer in gener-  
 al, that, let your case be as bad as you sup-  
 pose it, yet still you have cause to bless the  
 Lord. If you cannot thank him for his spe-  
 cial grace, yet surely you ought to praise him  
 for his unwearied patience, and these offers of  
 mercy which are daily tendered unto you :  
 Bless him that you are still on earth, in the  
 land

land of hope, and not confined to the regions of everlasting despair.

But I must not stop here. Come forward into the light, thou dark discouraged soul, and, in the presence of God, give a true and proper answer to these few questions. Thou complainest of the want of love to God, and thy complaints indeed show that thou hast no *delighting, enjoying* love: But answer me,

*1st*, Hast thou not a *desiring, seeking* love? A poor man who desires and seeks the world, shows his love to it as convincingly as the rich man who delights in it;—the tendency of the heart appears as truly in an anxious pursuit as in a delightful enjoyment. But, as the weakness of hope is frequently mistaken for the want of desire, I must ask you,

*2dly*, Do you not find a moaning, lamenting love? You show that you loved your friends by grieving for their death, as well as by delighting in them whilst they lived. If you heartily lament it, as your greatest unhappiness and loss, when you think that God doth cast you off, and that you are void of grace, and cannot serve and honour him as you would, this is an undoubted evidence that

your hearts are not void of the love of God.  
Once more,

3<sup>d</sup>, Would you not rather have a heart to love God, than to have all the riches and pleasures in the world? Would it not comfort you more than any thing else, if you could be sure that he loveth you, and if you could perfectly love and obey him? If so, then know assuredly, that it is not the want of love, but the want of assurance that causeth thy dejection.

And therefore I charge thee, in the name of God, to render unto him that tribute of praise which is due. To be much employed in this heavenly duty, has an evident tendency to vanquish all hurtful doubts and fears;—by keeping the soul near to God, and within the warmth of his love and goodness;—by dissipating distrustful vexing thoughts, and diverting the mind to sweeter things;—by keeping off the tempter, who usually is least able to follow us when we are highest in the praises of our God and Saviour;—and especially by bringing out the evidences of our sincerity, while the chiefest graces are in exercise.

Praise

Praise brings comfort to the soul, as standing in the sunshine brings warmth to the body, or as the sight of a dear friend rejoices the heart, without any great reasoning or arguing in the case. Come then, my dear friends, and make the experiment. Obey that voice which proceedeth out of the throne, saying, 'Praise our God all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.' Let no voice be amissing on this solemn occasion, but let us all be as one, praising and thanking the Lord, while we commemorate his goodness and everlasting mercy; and then may we hope that he will grace our communion-table with his presence, proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, and fill all the guests with the fatness of his house. Amen.

## S E R M O N XII.

EZEKIEL, xxxvi. 31.

*Then shall ye remember your own evil ways,  
and your doings that were not good, and  
shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for  
your iniquities and for your abominations.*

**T**HE Jews were at this time captives in Babylon, and so dispersed through that vast empire, that they said of themselves, in the language of despair, ‘ Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts.’ Even the Prophet himself looked on their case as so irrecoverable by human means, that, when God gave him a visionary representation of their state, by a valley covered with dry bones, and put the question to him, ‘ Son of Man, can these bones live?’ His answer was, ‘ O Lord God, thou knowest.’ With thee indeed all things are possible; Omnipotence may do  
this

this great thing ; but whether it shall be done, or by what means it may come to pass, thou, O Lord God, and thou only knowest.

Thus abject and hopeless was the condition of the Jews when God published his gracious design to take them from among the heathen, and to bring them back into their own land, (verse 28.) ‘ Ye shall dwell,’ saith he, ‘ in the land that I gave to your fathers ; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses : And I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.’ And then, even at this season of returning peace and plenty, at this season, which so often misleads and intoxicates the mind of man, ‘ Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and for your abominations.’

The account which we have of these penitents furnisheth us with some very impor-

tant instructions with regard to the nature of true repentance, which I propose, in the *First* place, to illustrate; and then to recommend their example to your imitation. And the

1<sup>st</sup> Instruction which we obtain from this passage is, That true repentance is the gift of God, and the peculiar effect of his Holy Spirit. The course of providence is indeed admirably adapted to reclaim the sinner from the error of his ways. Bit ernes is written, as with a sun-beam, on the line of folly, and certain degrees of misery never fail to accompany our deviations from the path of duty. Yet so dead are men naturally in trespasses and sins, that nothing less than a divine power can render the best means of reformation effectual. Without this, judgments will harden rather than humble or reclaim the transgressor. We read of Ahaz King of Judah, that in the time of his distress, he did trespass yet more against the Lord. And we are told, in the book of Revelation, that the vials of wrath, which the angels shall pour out upon the men who have the mark of the beast, instead of leading them to repent and give glory to God, shall only cause them to blaspheme the name of God, who hath power  
over

over these plagues, and to curse the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores. The calamities with which {the Jews were visited in their captivity to the King of Babylon, were in like manner unproductive of any genuine repentance in that stiff-necked people. They had not only polluted their own land, but had also profaned the name of God among the heathen whether they went, and continued to do so, until he whom they had offended had pity on them for his own name's sake, and gave them a new heart and a new spirit, having taken away the stony heart out of their flesh, and given them a heart of flesh. A

*2d* Instruction which we derive from this passage is, That the grief and self-loathing of true penitents, do not flow so much from their feeling that sin is hurtful to themselves, as from the consideration of its own base nature, and especially of the ingratitude which it carries in it towards a kind and merciful God: For when were the Jews to remember their own evil ways? When were they to loathe themselves in their own sight for their iniquities and their abominations? Was it  
when

when they felt the rod, and lay under the feet of their cruel oppressors? No, it was when they should be delivered out of their hands, brought back to their own country, and enriched with the multiplied fruits of their trees, and the increase of their fields. *Then* were their sins to rise up in their remembrance, filling them with grief and shame, for having offended a being of such transcendent goodness, and unmerited condescension.

Times of calamity do indeed often produce a temporary humiliation and repentance, which for a time resemble the real feelings of penitence; but self-love alone is at the bottom of the appearance. The man is wearied of the inconvenience, but not weaned from the love of sin. But true penitence hath its source in a nobler principle, and is rather the child of love than of fear. It is the melting of the soul at the fire of divine love; it is the relenting of the prodigal son, when his injured father runs forth to meet him; it is the tear of gratitude, which bursts from the condemned criminal, when a pardon from his  
offended

offended sovereign is put into his hands. It appears, in the

3<sup>d</sup> Place from this passage, that the soul's conversion to God is the great introductory blessing which renders all other blessings valuable. This is evident from the order in which God arrangeth his promises to his captive people. He first engageth himself to take away the provoking cause of his anger, and then to put away his indignation, to receive them graciously, and to love them freely. The disease began within, and the cure must begin there likewise. Their captivity by men was the fruit of their voluntary captivity to sin, and therefore deliverance from sin must precede their deliverance from the hands of men. This God undertakes to perform by the powerful agency of his Holy Spirit. 'A new heart,' saith he, '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 a 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,' verses 26, 27. After which he gives the promise

mise of temporal deliverance, in the verses immediately preceding my text. And to shew that this was no accidental arrangement, he declares, with great solemnity, at the 33d verse, that in this very order he had meditated to dispense his mercy. ‘ Thus saith the Lord God, in the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded.’

These are the instructions which we may derive from this passage, with regard to the nature of true repentance; and it is only to be added, although not expressly contained in the text, that as this great and valuable blessing cometh down from the Father of lights, who is the author of every good and perfect gift, it is therefore to be sought by our humble supplications and prayers; ‘ For thus saith the Lord God,’ at the 37th verse of this chapter, ‘ I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.’ God, indeed, is often found of those who seek him not. His powerful grace sometimes arrests the sinner in his mad career, while he is equally unmindful of God and of himself.

But

But let none despise the use of means, because he who is almighty at times acts without them. It is our part to place ourselves in the way of his mercy, and to wait patiently at the pool until the angel trouble the waters, and communicate to them a healing virtue. It is our part to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near, having the certain assurance that he never said to any of the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain. And this leads me to the

II. Thing proposed, which was to recommend the example of these penitents described in the text to your imitation. In the

*1<sup>st</sup>* Place, then, let me call upon you to remember your ways. The neglect of serious consideration is the ruin of almost every soul that perisheth eternally. Hence it is that we continue in our sins, and that we relapse after having forsaken them; that we decline from our religious attainments, and being again entangled in the pollutions of the world, that our last state becomes worse than our first. All these evils flow from a thoughtless unreflecting

reflecting life. A great part of mankind pass their days in a course of perpetual dissipation, without once reflecting on their actions, until the near view of an eternal world awakens them from this fatal security. Then, indeed, the case is extremely altered. Then the remembrance of his ways forceth itself upon the sinner. Then he sees his error, and laments his folly, and prays for mercy, and even asks the prayers of those whom once he derided as precise and fanatical. He would not reflect upon the great truths of religion, while he might have done it to good purpose. Now he reflects, and reflects at leisure; but it is a cruel leisure, for the fruits of it are perplexity and dismay.

God is represented, by the Prophet Jeremiah, as putting this question, ‘ Why is the  
 ‘ people of Jerufalem flidden back with a per-  
 ‘ petual backsliding? They hold fast deceit,  
 ‘ they refuse to return.’ Jeremiah, viii. 5. The answer is given in the following verse,  
 ‘ I hearkened and heard, but they spake not  
 ‘ aright; no man repented him of his wick-  
 ‘ edness, saying, ‘ What have I done?’ the  
 consequence of which was, ‘ Every one turn-

‘ ed

‘ ed to his course, as the horse rusheth into  
‘ the battle.’ Whereas, did we seriously ask  
ourselves that important question, What have  
we done? we would soon discover so much  
guilt in our doings, as to be compelled to ask  
ourselves another question, What shall I do  
to be saved?

Let me then prevail with you seriously  
and impartially to examine your past conduct.  
Consider what hath been the prevailing course  
of your life; and rest not satisfied with a ge-  
neral conviction that it hath been wrong, but  
labour to recollect as many passages of it as  
you can. Review all its different periods  
since you came to the years of understand-  
ing. Consider the various relations in which  
you have been placed, the special duties  
which arose from those relations, and the  
manner in which you have performed them.  
This will be a task displeasing indeed to the  
flesh, and mortifying to the natural pride of  
your hearts. But you must not hearken to  
these pernicious counsellors: The more they  
cry out, Forbear, the more resolutely must  
you persist. Charge your consciences with  
it as a religious duty, and implore the Holy  
Spirit.

Spirit of God to assist your endeavours. When by such means you have discovered your own evil ways, then proceed to consider attentively the nature and degree of that evil which is in them. Let it not suffice to know that you have been sinners, without pondering the dreadful malignity and demerit of sin. View it in its natural turpitude and deformity, as the plague and leprosy of the soul, which renders you loathsome and abominable in the sight of your Maker. View it as a daring act of rebellion against the most righteous authority, as the transgression of a law which is in all respects holy, just, and good, the precepts of which are not only reasonable in themselves, but also most kind and salutary to us. View it as the basest ingratitude towards your best and most unwearied benefactor. View it, above all, in the severity of the punishment which it deserves, exemplified in those mysterious and inconceivable sufferings which the son of God underwent to expiate its guilt.

See here, O sinner, the awful demerit of thy transgressions. Thou wast doomed to the wrath of God, and to everlasting banishment  
from

from his presence: And thou wast not only incapable to deliver thyself by any works or sufferings of thy own, but all the angels in heaven could not have offered a price that would have ransomed thy perishing soul. None else could pay thy debt but the Son of God, and even he could pay it in no other way, than by suffering the penalty which thou hadst incurred. O how hateful doth sin appear when viewed in this light! Adam's expulsion from Paradise, the deluge of the ancient world, the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, loudly proclaim its pernicious nature and heinous demerit. We feel it to be hurtful in the natural evils of sickness and pain to which it hath subjected us. Death, which is its wages, is an awful monitor of its malignant effects. It appears terrible in the worm that never dieth, and in the fire that is not quenched. But no where doth it appear so deformed and odious, as in the sufferings and death of Christ: For how deep must that stain have been, which nothing could wash away but the blood of the Son of God? How deadly that disease which no other medicine could cure?

But as these considerations are applicable to all sins in common, it will be necessary, in order to your forming a just estimate of your own evil ways, to look more narrowly into the aggravating circumstances with which they have been attended.

Have not many of your transgressions been committed with knowledge and deliberation, nay, with artifice and cunning? Have they not cost you no small degrees of study, before those desires which lust conceived, were accomplished in actual sin? Have you not courted temptation, and wearied yourselves with committing iniquity? Consider what degrees of resistance from your own minds you have vanquished; what obstacles in providence you have overcome; what strivings of the Holy Spirit you have defeated in the course of your transgressions. Nay, have not some of your sins been still more aggravated, by the breach of express vows and resolutions against them, often repeated with the greatest solemnity? Hide not your eyes from any of these aggravating circumstances which have attended your offences. Every sin which you wilfully cover, or extenuate,

nuate, will thereby gain an invincible addition of strength. Every lust, which you conceal in your bosom, will become a viper which one day will sting you to the heart. Every good disposition, which you magnify, shall languish and pine away; and those treasures of grace, with which the humble are enriched, shall be of no advantage to you, till you feel your poverty and wretchedness. Let me therefore call on you to exercise the

2d Branch of repentance, which is here exemplified to us, viz. Loathing yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and for your abominations. And say, O sinner, is there not cause for this? Dost thou loathe that which is deformed and filthy? 'We are all,' saith the Prophet Isaiah, 'as an unclean thing; and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in us, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.' Thou art displeas'd with thine enemies who seek to injure thee; but where is there such an enemy as thou art to thyself? Men may wrong thee in thy temporal interests, but no  
P 2 man,

man, nay no created being, can ruin thy soul without thine own concurrence. It is thou, and none else, that hast wounded thy conscience, and thrown away thy peace, and exposed thy soul to everlasting misery. Thou abhorrest him who hath killed thy dearest friend; but where hadst thou ever such a friend as the Lord Jesus Christ, whom, by thy sins, thou hast crucified and slain? Thy sins brought him down from heaven to earth; thy sins subjected him to poverty, persecution, and reproach; thy sins involved him in conflicts dreadful and unutterable, nailed him to the cross, and laid him low in the grave. By thy sins thou hast often trampled on his blood, crucified him afresh, and put him to an open shame. Is there not cause, then, to loathe thyself in thine own sight, for thine iniquities and for thine abominations? But as there are several counterfeits of this penitent disposition, it may be proper to mention a few of them, that you may have a clearer view of that self-loathing which I am desirous of recommending to you.

A man who, by his base unworthy behaviour, has forfeited the esteem of the world,  
may

may feel much inward shame and uneasiness on that account, which may be mistaken by others, and even by himself, for true humiliation. And yet though he seem to loathe both himself and his sins, he doth neither truly, and there is nothing genuine or promising in this kind of remorse. If the world would be reconciled to him, he would soon be reconciled to himself; for at bottom he hath no other quarrel with his sins, but that they happen to be disgraceful in the eyes of those whose esteem he would wish to preserve.

In like manner a natural conscience, irritated by some flagrant violation of the law of God, may severely sting the offender with shame and remorse. Yet, when narrowly examined, this shame amounts to no more than a proud vexation, that he cannot think so well of himself as he would wish to do. If the exchange could be made, he would rather part with that conscience which gives him uneasiness, than with those sins which occasion its reproofs; and his only motive in condemning his sins is, that he may pacify that awful monitor. Nay, a man may advance a step farther,

and make still nearer approaches to the gracious temper described in the text, without fully attaining it. He may see the baseness and deformity of sin, and be deeply afflicted at the remembrance of his multiplied transgressions, and yet, through ignorance of the inbred corruption of his nature, he may be far from loathing himself in the spirit of true penitence.

What a beast was I, may he say, to act in a manner so reproachful to my faculties? Had I not reason to direct me? Could I not have governed my will and affections? Was I not master of my own heart and ways? Thus he may complain, and seemingly condemn himself; but this self-condemning language is in truth the expression of reigning pride, even as none are more severe in blaming themselves for misconduct in their worldly affairs, than those who have the highest opinion of their ability to manage them aright.

In opposition to this, the truly convinced sinner sees himself to be all guilt, pollution, and weakness, destitute equally of righteousness and strength. He is led to see that corrupt

rupt fountain of inward enmity to God, which is manifested in the issues of his outward conduct. He is made sensible that he 'was conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity, and that in him, that is in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing.' On these accounts he loathes himself in his own sight, not partially or occasionally only, for having acted a wrong part, which he supposeth that by prudence he might have avoided; but universally, as a degenerate and corrupted being. He can find nothing to be proud of, nothing that he can call his own, but guilt, disorder, and weakness: And, under this conviction, he falls down before God, saying, with Job, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhorre myself in dust and ashes.'

This is that self-loathing which I now call upon you to exercise. And the necessity of it is apparent; for until you are brought thus low in your own estimation, you will never esteem the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone can save you from the wrath to come. Who is it that values a physician while he feels no

disease, and hath no fears of death? Will any fly to Christ for refuge, who is not sensible that he stands in need of such a saviour? No, they only who are perishing in their own apprehensions, will welcome the tidings of a Redeemer, and look to him, as the stung Israelites looked to the brazen serpent, lying prostrate at his feet, and resigning themselves wholly to his disposal and government.

Let me then conclude, with exhorting you to repair to that fountain which is opened for sin and for uncleanness; to that blood which can cleanse you from all sin. This is the proper use and improvement of all that hath been said. Here is a remedy for all your diseases, a full supply for all your wants. Here you will find gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and the shame of your nakedness do not appear. The Lord Jesus is a complete saviour. Be your burden what it will, he is able to support it. His merit surpasseth your guilt, by infinite degrees; and his victorious spirit can subdue and mortify your most imperious. Let what hath been  
said

said then lead you to him. Dwell on the consideration of your own vileness, till your self-confidence is entirely destroyed, and your hearts disposed to receive him as the unspeakable gift of God to man.

In this your Christianity doth consist, and on this your justification depends. This is the sum of your conversion, and the very soul of the new creature. Other things are only preparatives to this, or fruits that grow out of it. Christ is the end and fulfilling of the law, the substance of the gospel, the way to the Father, the help, the hope, the life of the believer. If you know not HIM, you know nothing; if you possess not HIM, you have nothing; and if you be out of HIM, you can do nothing that hath a promise of salvation. O, then, fly to him as your refuge and sanctuary, and commit your souls into his hands, that he may purify and form them for himself. Plead, in the language of David, Psalms, li. 3. ‘ Wash me thoroughly  
‘ from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from  
‘ my sin. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall  
‘ be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter  
‘ than snow.’ And look by faith for the accomplishment

complishment of that promise, Ezekiel, xxxvi. 25. ' 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.' Amen.

S E R-

## S E R M O N XIII.

JOB, xxxvi. 21.

*Take heed; regard not iniquity; for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction.*

**T**HESSE words were addressed to Job, who, from the height of prosperity, was suddenly plunged into the deepest and most complicated distress. They are the words of Elihu, the youngest, but by far the wisest and most candid of all Job's friends. The other three were indeed, as he himself had stiled them, miserable comforters. It was their belief, that adversity was in all cases a certain token of God's displeasure; and, upon this principle, they endeavoured to persuade this excellent servant of God, that his whole religion was false and counterfeit, that divine justice had now laid hold of him, and that he

was

was suffering the punishment of his hypocrisy and iniquity.

At length Elihu interposes; and, moved with zeal for the honour of God, and with compassion to his friend, he unfolds the mysteries of Divine Providence, asserts and proves that affliction is designed for the trial of the good, as well as for the punishment of the bad, directs Job to the right improvement of his present distress, and comforts him with the prospect of a happy deliverance from it, as soon as his heart should be thoroughly moulded into a meek and patient submission to the will of his God. At the same time, he rebukes him with a becoming dignity for some rash and unadvised speeches which the severity of his other friends, and the sharpness of his own anguish, had drawn from him, and particularly cautions him in the passage before us; ‘Take heed; regard  
‘not iniquity; for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction.’

The latter part of the text contains an heavy censure, for which some of Job’s impatient wishes for relief had no doubt given too just occasion. But these expressions, uttered in

his

his hafte, he afterwards retracted, and finally came out from the furnace of affliction, like gold tried and refined by the fire.—What I propofe, in difcourfing on this fubject, is to illuftrate and prove the general propofition, that there can be no greater folly than to feek to efcape from affliction by complying with the temptations of fin; or, in other words, that the fmalleft act of deliberate tranfgreffion is infinitely worfe than the greateft calamity we can fuffer in this life.

That the greater part of mankind are under the influence of the contrary opinion, may be too juftly inferred from their practice. How many have recourfe to finful pleasures to relieve their inward diftrefs? What unlawful methods do others ufe, for acquiring the perifhing riches or honours of this world? while, in order to evade fufferings for righteousnefs fake, thoufands make fhipwreck of faith and a good confcience, through finful compliances with the manners of the world, againft the clear and deliberate conviction of their own minds. Thefe things plainly fhew, that the fubject I have chofen is of the  
highest

highest importance ; and if what may be said on it shall be so far blessed to any, as to render sin more odious, or affliction less formidable, I shall gain one of the noblest ends of my office, and we shall have reason to acknowledge, that our meeting together has been for the better, and not for the worse.

In proof, then, of the general proposition, That there can be no greater folly than to chuse sin rather than affliction, let it be observed,

I. That sin separates us from God, the only source of real felicity. That man is not sufficient to his own happiness is a truth confirmed by the experience of all who have candidly attended to their own feelings. It is the consciousness of this insufficiency of the human mind for its own happiness, which makes men seek resources from abroad ; which makes them fly to pleasures and amusements of various kinds, whose chief value consists in filling up the blanks of time, and diverting their uneasy reflections from their own internal poverty. But these are vain and deceitful

ceitful refuges of lies. The want remains, and we have found out only the means of putting away the sense of it for a time. God alone can be the source of real happiness to an immortal soul, an adequate supply to all its faculties, an inexhaustible subject to its understanding, an everlasting object to its affections.

Sin bereaves the soul of man of this its only portion. ‘Behold,’ saith the prophet, ‘God’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is his ear heavy that it cannot hear, but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.’ Affliction, on the other hand, instead of separating the soul from God, is often the means of bringing it nearer to him. Let a man be ever so poor, diseased, reproached, persecuted, still if he hold fast his integrity, if he be a real saint, he is near and dear to God. The eyes of the Lord are upon him, and his ears are open to his cry. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about him, and a guard of angels wait to carry

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ry his departing spirit into Abraham's bosom. Whereas sin renders us loathsome in the eyes of God. He is angry with the wicked every day; and even their prayers and sacrifices are an abomination to him. He hath bent his bow, and made it ready; he hath also prepared for him the instruments of death. God looks on them with abhorrence, and, when conscience is awake, they think of him with horror, and dare not come into his presence, knowing that he is a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity.

II. Affliction may not only consist with the love of a father, but may even be the fruit of it. 'Whom the Lord loveth he chafteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receives.—By this,' saith the Prophet Isaiah, speaking of affliction, 'shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.' David could say, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word.' A good man may even

even glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him. But sin is always both evil in its own nature, and pernicious in its effects. This contrast is very strikingly displayed by the Apostle Paul. Of the one he speaks as a privilege, and a token for good to those who are exercised thereby. ‘Unto you,’ saith he, (writing to the Philippians, i. 29.) ‘it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.’ But what doth he say concerning the other, Romans vii. 24. ‘O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ If any had ever reason to complain of the burden of affliction, Paul had more—‘in labours more abundant, in stripes above measures, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.’ But, in the midst of these sufferings, we never hear him crying out, Who shall deliver me from this weight of unremitting distress? His inward corruption gave him greater pain, than

the evils of his outward condition ; and his captivity to the law of sin was worse to him than prisons, and tortures, and death.

III. Sin is evil whether we feel it or not, and worst when we are most insensible of it. To be past feeling, in this respect, is the greatest curse we can possibly bring on ourselves, and the most desperate condition in which a human creature can be placed before his everlasting doom be pronounced, is when God saith of him, as he did of Ephraim of old; ‘ He is joined to his idols, let him alone.’

Affliction, on the other hand, though a bitter, is yet a salutary medicine ; and though no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby. Affliction is the discipline by which we are trained to glory, and honour, and virtue. If this world, indeed, were our only portion, there would be some reason, or at least some excuse for chusing the pleasures of iniquity, rather than those sufferings which would embitter the short period of our existence in it.

But

But the greatest error we can possibly fall into, is that of taking it for the place of our rest. To cure this fatal mistake, God visits us with afflictions. They are his messengers sent to teach us our true condition, what this world is, a fleeting scene of vanity and illusions; and what we ourselves are in it, pilgrims and strangers, hastening to another land of perpetual abode.

IV. In affliction we are commonly passive, but always active in sin. The one is left to our choice; the other is not. When we suffer in the cause of virtue, we are in the hand of our most faithful and everlasting friend; but when we sin in order to avoid suffering, we commit ourselves into the hands of that malicious, cunning, and eternal enemy, who goeth about seeking whom he may destroy. Affliction only hurts the body, but sin affects the health and well-being of that immortal principle, which is destined to survive the ruins of this earthly tabernacle, and to inherit happiness or misery for ever. Which leads me to observe, in the *last* place,

That the evil of affliction is but of short duration, but that of sin perpetual. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning; and these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Should they continue throughout our whole lives, yet even that is but a moment, compared with eternity. The evil of sin, on the contrary, goes beyond the grave, and lasts as long as the soul itself, which it has polluted. The delight of it is soon gone, but the sting remains; the guilt and punishment of it pass with us into the other world, and there constitute the worm that never dieth, and the fire which is not quenched.

These observations may suffice to illustrate the general proposition, That there can be no greater folly than to seek to escape from affliction, by complying with the temptations to sin; or, in other words, that the smallest act of deliberate transgression is infinitely worse than the greatest calamity we can suffer in this life.

What

What hath been said ought, in the 1<sup>st</sup> place, to serve for reproof to those who, so far from considering iniquity as more to be dreaded as a greater evil than affliction, will not refrain from their ungodly and vicious practices; even when their sin proves their affliction. To many, alas! it seems to be as their meat and drink to obey the commands of sin, by fulfilling the lusts thereof. In vain hath the word of God and providence admonished them, that nought but bitterness is to be found in the path of folly. They still pursue that path, in defiance of their own experience, and weary themselves with committing iniquity. They break through all restraints, not only when an angel stands in the way, but where ruin, misery, and destruction, stare them broad in the face. How many are to be seen bound with the cords of their own sins, from which they have neither the inclination nor power to free themselves? How many wasted and maimed by criminal indulgence? How many brought to poverty and rags by riot and intemperance? ‘ Who hath wo? who hath for-  
 ‘ row? who hath contentions? who hath  
 ‘ wounds without cause? who hath redness

‘ of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine,  
 ‘ they that go to seek mixed wine.’ Sin has  
 had its martyrs as well as godliness, who, in  
 premature old age, have been made to possess  
 the transgressions of their youth, in all the  
 bitter fruits of a body tortured with diseases,  
 and a spirit wounded with remorse.

Let us then be warned, ere it be too late,  
 against the fatal error referred to in the text;  
 the preference of the momentary pleasures of  
 sin, to the salutary discipline of affliction. Let  
 us never allow ourselves to imagine, that any  
 present pleasure or advantage of sin will com-  
 pensate the dreadful evils which it carries in  
 its train; but uniformly oppose, to every such  
 suggestion of a deceived mind, that impor-  
 tant and solemn question which our Lord ad-  
 dressed to the multitude, ‘ What shall it pro-  
 ‘ fit a man, if he shall gain the whole world,  
 ‘ and lose his own soul; or what shall a man  
 ‘ give in exchange for his soul?’

*2dly*, Let us examine ourselves carefully,  
 whether our judgment and choice have been  
 rectified on this important point. What is it  
 that affects us with the deepest concern and  
 sorrow; the adverse events in providence, or  
 the

the sins by which we have incurred the loss of the divine favour? When the hand of God lies heavy on us, what do we desire with the greatest earnestness; whether is it to have the trial sanctified, or to have it removed? What is the chief object of your ambition; is it to grow in grace, and in conformity to the image of God; or is it to become great, and prosperous, and powerful in the world? Were God now to put wisdom or riches in our choice, as he once did to Solomon, would we determine as he did; or would we grasp at the riches, leaving it to age and experience to bring wisdom along with them in the ordinary supposed course of things? In what character does Christ appear most amiable to us, as a saviour from punishment, or as a saviour from sin? Finally, in what view does heaven appear most worthy of our desires and wishes; as a place of deliverance from suffering, or as a state of perfect freedom from sin and infirmity of every kind, where we shall be enabled to serve God with the entire affections and powers of our whole nature?

By these marks let us try the real state of our characters, that so we may not pass through life with a lie in our right hands; but knowing that we are of the truth, may assure our hearts before God, looking for his mercy unto eternal life. Amen.

S E R

## S E R M O N XIV.

## II. CORINTHIANS, v. 1.

*For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

**T**HE prospect of a blessed immortality is one of the most powerful supports to the people of God, amidst all the trials of their present state; and therefore hope is compared to an anchor, which being cast within the vail, keeps the soul firm and unmoved, so that nothing from without can disturb its inward peace and tranquillity. This was the true foundation of that courage and constancy, with which the Apostles and primitive Christians endured and overcame the most grievous sufferings. Faith presented to their view a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, in comparison of which their present  
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sent afflictions appeared so light and momentary, that they were incapable of giving them much pain or uneasiness, as the Apostle more fully declares in the close of the preceding chapter. And being unwilling to leave such an agreeable subject, he further enlarges upon it in the words of my text, ‘ For we know, ‘ that if our earthly house of this tabernacle ‘ were dissolved, we have a building of God, ‘ an house not made with hands, eternal in the ‘ heavens.’ Death itself can do us no real prejudice; on the contrary, we have reason to welcome it as a friend, because, when it beats down these tenements of clay in which we are lodged, or rather imprisoned upon earth, it only opens a passage for us into a far more commodious and lasting habitation, where we shall possess the greatest riches, the highest honours, and the most transporting pleasures, without intermission, and without end.

I. He compares the body to an earthly house, yea to a tabernacle or tent, which is still less durable, and more easily taken down, and therefore the dissolution of such a frail thing  
ought

ought not to be reckoned a very great calamity. To this he opposes, in the

II. Place, the glorious object of the Christian hope, which he calls a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And,

III. He expresses the firm persuasion which he had, in common with all true believers, of being admitted into that glorious and permanent dwelling place, as soon as the earthly tabernacle should be dissolved.

Each of these particulars I shall briefly illustrate, and then direct you to the practical improvement of the whole.

I begin with the first of these heads, which respects our state and condition upon earth; and in the description here given us, there are several things that deserve our notice.

1<sup>st</sup>, The body is called an house; and it may well get this name, on account of its curious frame and structure, all the parts of it being adjusted with the greatest exactness, in so much that there is not one member redundant nor superfluous, nor any thing wanting that is necessary either for ornament or use.

But

But it is principally with relation to the inward inhabitant, that the body gets the name of a house in the text. It is a lodging fitted up for the soul to dwell in. It is the residence of an immortal spirit, and from thence it derives its chief honour and dignity. As God created this earth, before he made any of the creatures which were to inhabit it, and as the world was completely furnished with every thing necessary and desirable, before man, its intended sovereign, was introduced; so likewise, in the formation of man, God began with the body, and first completed the outward fabric, before he breathed into it a living soul. How foolish then are they who spend all their thoughts and cares upon the bodies, and overlook those immortal spirits within, for whose use and accommodation they were solely intended, especially when it is considered, in the

2d Place, that the body was not only made for the service of the soul, but that it is likewise composed of the meanest materials, even of that dust which we trample under foot. Upon this account, the Apostle calls it in the text, not merely a house, but an earthly house.

house. Thus we are told, Genesis, ii. 7. ' that  
' the Lord God formed man of the dust of  
' the ground.' None of us can claim an  
higher extraction. We may all say to cor-  
ruption, Thou art my father, and to the worm,  
thou art my mother and my sister. And as  
the body is an earthly house with respect to  
its original, so it is constantly supported and  
repaired by that which grows out of the earth,  
' The king himself,' saith Solomon, ' is serv-  
' ed by the field ;' yea, after a little time, we  
must all be reduced unto earth again. These  
bodies will shortly mix with the common  
clay: Dust we are, and unto dust we shall  
return. This, I confess, is a very humbling  
representation ; but as it is true, it ought not  
to be slightly regarded by any of us, and  
young people, in a peculiar manner, may reap  
much advantage from it. You perhaps are  
strong and healthy, and, with respect to out-  
ward form, either have, or fancy you have,  
advantages beyond others. Come hither, then,  
and view yourselves in the glass of my text.  
Your bodies, in their highest perfection, are  
but earthly houses ; and after all the pains  
you can take upon them, their beauty will  
shortly.

shortly confume like the moth. If age do not wrinkle it, death will dissolve it. The comliest body shall ere long be as loathsome as the dirt on the streets, and must be buried several years out of sight, too, before it can be born with as well. Need I tell you, then, that the noble inhabitant within is by far most worthy of your care and attention. Here your labour can never be lost, for when the dust shall return to the earth as it was, the spirit shall return to God who gave it; it survives the ruins of this earthly tenement, and, if adorned while here with the beauties of holiness, it shall flourish eternally in the presence of God, in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore. Be persuaded, then, my dear friends, to make the improvement of your souls your principal study. They were made at first after the likeness of God, and herein consisted both their glory and felicity. Let this then be your highest ambition, your constant unwearied endeavour to get this divine image reinstamped upon them, that being purged and refined from all your dross, you  
may

may become meet for the inheritance of the faints in light.

*3d*, It deserves our notice, that the Apostle not only calls the body an earthly house, but the earthly house of a tabernacle, to make us still more sensible of its meanness and frailty. A tabernacle or tent, you know, is a very slender habitation—a few slight poles put in the ground, and a piece of canvass or painted cloth thrown over them; yet such is the body of a man, a fair but frail tenement, liable to be thrown down, or torn in pieces by every blast of wind. At any rate, we are told, in the

*4th* Place, That these earthly tabernacles must at length be dissolved. Death will soon plant its batteries against them; this king of terrors will storm them with troops of pains and diseases, and shall in the issue so far prevail, as to dislodge the soul from the body, and throw down the house of clay, crumbling it into that dust from which it was taken. This is not a bye-law that binds only a few, but an universal royal statute, that stands in force against the whole human race. ‘It is appointed for all men once to die,’ saith this Apostle;

Apostle ; hence the road to the grave is called the way of all the earth, and the grave itself is stiled, in Scripture, the house appointed for all living. Even the bodies of the saints, which have been the temples of the Holy Ghost, and subject to this awful decree ; they, too, must be dissolved and see corruption, but with this material difference, that in due time they shall be raised up again, in glory and incorruption. Nor shall their souls for any space be destitute of an habitation ; for as the Apostle here informs us, ‘ they have  
 ‘ a building of God, an house not made with  
 ‘ hands, eternal in the heavens.’ And this is the

II. Branch of the text, upon which I shall offer a few obvious remarks. I suppose you have already observed, that this figurative description of the future happy state of the saints, is conceived in terms of opposition to their present state of frailty and mortality. Once, indeed, the Apostle calls the body a house, but he immediately explains his meaning, by calling it a tabernacle, a slender thing which is easily taken down, or moved out of

its

its place ; whereas their future abode is stiled an house, without any diminishing epithet ; a place of rest and safety, where they dwell with God the great master of the family, and enjoy the sweetest communion with the Father of their spirits, and all those social pleasures which the company and conversation of their brethren and fellow servants can be supposed to give them.

Our blessed Lord, in his last consolatory discourse to his disciples, made choice of the same similitude, as best adapted to dispel that gloom which was hanging over their minds.

‘ In my Father’s house,’ said he, ‘ are many  
 ‘ mansions ; if it were not so, I would have  
 ‘ told you. I go to prepare a place for you,  
 ‘ and if I go and prepare a place for you, I  
 ‘ will come again and receive you to myself,  
 ‘ that where I am there ye may be also.’

And is not this, my brethren, a delightful representation of the saints felicity ? Every word is full of melody. The very notion of an house or home is agreeable, especially to a poor pilgrim, who is tossed and persecuted in a malignant world, and perhaps, like his

great Master, has not where to lay his head. But to what a height must our joy arise, when we hear that this is the house of God himself, the house of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, where we shall dwell with our dearest friend and benefactor, and have a place allotted us in those happy mansions which his blood hath purchased, and his infinite love hath prepared for us.

This house is farther described by the builder of it. The great God is the architect, and therefore we may be assured that nothing is wanting, that can render it a fit habitation for his people. It is a house not made with hands; it was not built by any creature, neither was it formed out of any pre-existent matter, but created immediately by God himself. It is called his building, by way of eminence: All things were made by him, but this was intended for the master-piece of his works, the brightest display of his creating power and goodness.

This house is farther described by its situation—it is a house in the heavens. The earth which we now inhabit is a valley of tears, a  
place

place of exile, a common inn as it were, where clean and unclean, saints and sinners, meet together, and are promiscuously entertained. Here the godly live as in a strange land, amidst the enemies of their Father and their King, where their righteous souls are vexed from day to day, with the unlawful deeds, and filthy conversation, of those among whom they are obliged to dwell. But heaven is a place of perfect purity, where there is nothing that defileth, nothing to hurt or destroy. None shall be able to ascend unto that hill of God, none can dwell in that holy place, but such as have clean hands and pure hearts; who are washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. And,

*Last* of all, this house in the heavens is farther described and commended by its duration. It is not subject to decay or dissolution, it is an eternal house, an incorruptible inheritance, a kingdom that cannot be shaken. All other things shall wax old and perish, but this shall endure for ever and ever.

But who are the persons for whom this building of God is prepared; or how shall we know whether we belong to that happy number?—This, my brethren, is a most important inquiry, which I propose to make the subject of another discourse.

S E R-

## S E R M O N XV.

## II. CORINTHIANS, v. 1.

*For we know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

**I**N the first part of this verse, the Apostle compares the body to an earthly house, yea to a tabernacle or tent, which is still less durable, and more easily taken down, and therefore the dissolution of such a frail thing ought not to be reckoned a very great calamity. To this he opposes the glorious object of the Christian hope, which he calls ‘ a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.’ At the same time expresses the firm persuasion which he had, in common with all true Christians, of being admitted into that glorious and per-

manent habitation, as soon as the earthly tabernacle should be dissolved. ‘ We know.’ He does not say we think, or we hope so, but we are assured of it; we are as firmly persuaded that this shall be our lot, as if we were already entered upon the possession of it. In handling this important branch of the subject, I propose, through divine aid,

I. To describe the persons for whom this building of God is prepared.

II. To inquire how or by what means they come to know that they shall certainly possess it.

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

The Psalmist proposes a question in the 24th Psalm, which you must all be sensible deserves our most serious attention. ‘ Who shall ascend into the hill of God, and who shall stand in his holy place.’ This is the question which I am now going to answer, and as God enables me I shall follow the light of his own word, and bring in nothing as a mark of the heirs of glory, but what is clearly

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ly expressed in the Scriptures of truth, that infallible rule by which we must all be judged at last.

*1<sup>st</sup>*, Then, we are taught that this building of God, this house in the heavens, is prepared for believers in Christ Jesus, and for them only, exclusive of all others. ‘ This is the will of him that sent me,’ says our blessed Lord, John, vi. 40. ‘ that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.’ It is faith which unites us to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the heir of all things; for, ‘ to as many as receive him, to them gives he power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on his name;’ and if once we are made sons, then are we likewise heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, and may confidently expect that inheritance which he hath purchased. By nature we are all children of wrath, and can look for nothing but judgment and fiery indignation, to devour us

as adverfaries ; but immediately upon our believing on the Lord Jefus Chrift, the great Mediator between God and man, we pafs from death to life, God receives us into favour, adopts us into his family, and invefts us with a title to all the privileges of children, of which this is the greateft and the beft, that we fhall dwell with him for ever in the building here fpoken of, this houfe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

*2dly*, Another qualification, by which the heirs of glory are diftinguifhed, is this, that they are new creatures, born from above, born again of the Spirit of God. ‘ If any  
 ‘ man be in Chrift he is a new creature ; old  
 ‘ things are paff away, behold all things are  
 ‘ become new.’ Whereas, ‘ If any man  
 ‘ have not the Spirit of Chrift, he is none of  
 ‘ his.—Except a man be born again,’ faid the faithful and true witnefs, ‘ he cannot fee  
 ‘ the kingdom of God,’ John, iii. 3. and verfe 5. ‘ Except a man be born of water and of  
 ‘ the Spirit, he cannot enter into the king-  
 ‘ dom of God.’ None but fuch as are born anew fhall find accefs into this building of  
 God,

God, when death pulls down these earthly tabernacles. Heaven, therefore, is stiled the inheritance of the saints in light. Nothing that is unclean can enter into that holy place. There must be a thorough change wrought in us before we can be admitted into the presence of God ; for the Scriptures are peremptory on this head, that without holiness no man shall see God. Christ must be formed within us, before we can entertain the hope of glory. We only delude ourselves, if we look for happiness till our souls are renewed by the Spirit of God ; for flesh and blood can never inherit the kingdom of heaven. A new heart must be given us, a new spirit must be put within us, before we can be fit for the sight and enjoyment of a holy God.

A partial reformation of manners will be of no avail—far less a mere abstinence from some grosser kinds of sin. The very frame and temper of our minds must be altered. Our corruptions must not only be restrained, but mortified. In a word, we must put off the whole old man, as the Apostle beautifully expresses it, ‘ and put on the new man,  
‘ which

‘ which after God is created in righteousness  
‘ and true holiness.’

3d, None shall dwell in this building of God, this house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, but those who live as pilgrims and strangers upon earth. If we seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, then, and then only, may we hope, that when he who is our life shall appear, we shall likewise appear with him in glory. It is one of the distinguishing characters of the wicked, that they mind earthly things. The children of God, on the other hand, have their conversation in heaven: They look upon that as their home, and view this world merely as a strange country, through which they must necessarily pass, before they can come to their father’s house. This heavenly temper is one of the most substantial evidences that they are born from above; for every thing tends to the place of its original. And as it proves their divine birth, so it is likewise a certain pledge of their future glory; for God will never abandon his own offspring—

‘ If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus  
‘ from the dead dwell in us, he that raised

‘ up

‘ up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken  
 ‘ our mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwel-  
 ‘ leth in us.’ He will certainly rebuild his  
 own temples, and not suffer them to continue  
 always under the ruins of death. I shall on-  
 ly add, in the

*4th* Place, That a constant readiness to do  
 good to all, especially to those who are of the  
 household of faith, is another Scripture mark  
 by which the heirs of glory are distinguish-  
 ed. This plainly appears from the account  
 which our Saviour gives us of the process of the  
 last judgment, Matthew, xxv. 34. ‘ Then  
 ‘ shall the King say unto them upon his right  
 ‘ hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inhe-  
 ‘ rit the kingdom prepared for you from the  
 ‘ foundation of the world; for I was an hun-  
 ‘ gred and ye gave me meat, thirsty and ye  
 ‘ gave me drink, I was a stranger and ye took  
 ‘ me in, naked and ye clothed me; I was  
 ‘ sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and  
 ‘ ye came unto me;’ which he afterwards  
 explains thus, ‘ in as much as ye did it unto  
 ‘ one of the least of these my brethren, ye  
 ‘ have done it unto me.’ Upon this account,  
 Paul exhorts Timothy, to ‘ charge them that  
 ‘ are

‘ are rich in this world, to do good, to  
‘ be rich in good works, ready to distri-  
‘ bute, willing to communicate, laying up for  
‘ themselves a good foundation against the  
‘ time to come, that they may lay hold on  
‘ eternal life.’ To the same purpose is that af-  
fectionate address of the Apostle John, I. John,  
iii. 18. 19. ‘ My little children, let us not  
‘ love in word, neither in tongue only, but in  
‘ deed and in truth ; and hereby we know  
‘ that we are of the truth, and shall assure  
‘ our hearts before him.’ Not that any thing  
done by us can merit a reward at the hand of  
God ; for after we have done all, we are but  
unprofitable servants, we have done no more  
than was our duty ; but these acts of obe-  
dience prove the sincerity of our faith and  
love. They are the genuine fruits of the new  
nature, and may lawfully be considered as  
evidences of our union with Christ, ‘ who of  
‘ God is made unto us wisdom, and righ-  
‘ teousness, and sanctification, and redemp-  
‘ tion.’ Thus have I laid before you a few  
distinguishing characters of the heirs of glory.  
These are the persons for whom God hath pre-  
pared this glorious building whereof my text  
speaks,

ſpeaks, this houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And what I have ſaid upon this head, will very much facilitate the

II. Inquiry propoſed, namely, How, or by what means, the ſaints come to know that they ſhall certainly poſſeſs this glorious inheritance, when the earthly houſe of this tabernacle is diſſolved.

Whatever proves our relation to Chriſt, at the ſame times proves our title to all the bleſſed fruits of his ſufferings and death; for all the promiſes of God are in him, yea and amen. ‘ 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.’ Whoever, then, can diſcover in himſelf thoſe gracious qualifications which I formerly named, has a ſufficient warrant to conclude that he is vitally united to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and conſequently an heir of that kingdom which he hath purchaſed. Thus Paul ſays of the primitive Chriſtians, that ‘ they took joyfully the ſpoiling  
 ‘ of their goods, knowing in themſelves that  
 ‘ they had in heaven a better and an enduring ſubſtance.’ They knew it in themſelves;  
 by

by looking inwards, they discovered such traces of the divine image; they felt such a supernatural life begun in their souls, as could be produced by no other agent than the Spirit of God, and might therefore be looked upon as a sure presage of their future glory. You see then, how this assurance is commonly obtained. The Scriptures describe the persons who shall infallibly be saved. The Christian compares himself with this unerring rule, and finding that the essential characters agree to him, from thence he concludes the certainty of his own salvation. He proceeds after this manner: God who cannot lie hath said, ‘He that believeth shall be saved;’—after the most serious and impartial examination, I find reason to conclude that by grace I have been enabled to believe,—therefore I am persuaded that I shall be saved.

The first of these propositions is absolutely sure, having the truth and faithfulness of God for its foundation; the second, as it is a judgment or sentence of our own minds, must, in its own nature, be fallible, and hence it is that believers have not all of them an equal assurance of their salvation. Though they are all persuaded

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ed that he who believeth shall be saved, yet every one cannot say for himself, I am persuaded that I believe, and therefore I shall be saved. Before a person can say this, there must be a farther work of the Spirit of God, even a divine light shining upon our faith and other graces, and making them visible to ourselves. We may derive good ground of hope from a strict and careful examination of our own temper and practice, but cannot arrive at a full assurance, till, as the Apostle expresses it, Romans, viii. 16. 'The Spirit himself bear  
'witness with our spirits, that we are the sons  
'of God.' But when this divine Witness concurs with his testimony, irradiating his own workmanship within us, and discovering to our own minds such linaments of the new creature, as plain evidence that we are born of God, then our assurance is full and complete; and we can joyfully say, with the Apostle in the text, 'We know, that if the  
'earthly house of this tabernacle were dis-  
'solved, we have a building of God, an house  
'not made with hands, eternal in the hea-  
'vens.' I now come to the practical improvement of the subject.

And

And, *1st*, I must speak a few words to those whocall themselves Deists. I know if you could you would stop our mouths, and bury the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; and yet I shall not cease to seek your good, and say, from time to time, what I can for your conviction. I seldom read the threatnings of the word, but I think of you with trembling; and I never read the comforts of it, but I think of you with pity. Pray, what assurance have you got of a happy eternity? In what house are you to take up your everlasting abode? Alas, every thing beyond the grave must be dark and fearful to you. You have no promise to build upon—no mediator to take hold of—no atonement to plead—no covenant to depend upon. You know that God is just, and you know that you are sinners—thus far you can proceed in your own scheme with certainty; but I defy you to move one step farther upon sure ground. You cannot prove that God is reconcileable, far less can you tell upon what terms he will be reconciled to you; so that your causes of fear are real and certain, whereas your hopes are mere guess work, having no other foundation than the doubtful

ful conjectures of your own darkened minds? What will you do when you come to die? A Christian can say, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth; and because he lives I shall live also.' But what will you be able to say, who have no Redeemer, no intercessor, into whose hands you can commit your departing spirits? who have nothing in your view but a tribunal of justice, a tribunal from which there is no appeal. Be entreated, my dear friends, to think of this in time. 'Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way: If once his wrath begin to burn, then shall you find that they, and they only, are blessed who put their trust in him. But,

*2dly*, This comfortable subject doth principally direct me to speak to Christians; and I shall address my exhortation to you in the words of the Apostle Peter, 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.' That this assurance is attainable you have already heard. Let me then press you, by some motives, to seek after it. Consider how much it is for your present interest. O the joy to be assured of the favour of God; this is heart ease, this is the very rest and

Sabbath of the soul, How sweet and comfortable will the thoughts of a Saviour be to you, when once you can say, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his.' Then will it do thee good to view his wounds by the eye of faith, and to put, as it were, thy hand into his side, when thou canst call him; with Thomas, my Lord and my God. The holy Scriptures will then have a double relish. With what delight will you turn over this charter of your future inheritance, and ponder that exceeding and eternal weight of glory which you shall one day possess. With what holy boldness may you approach the throne of grace, when you can call God your reconciled Father! What would a despairing sinner, who feels the burden of guilt, and the foretastes of everlasting misery, give for such a privilege, especially in a dying hour. How will this sweeten the difficulties of obedience. It was this that kept the Apostle from fainting, as we read in the close of the preceding chapter. What can quicken us more than to know, that after we have gone through a short life in this world, everlasting happiness shall be our portion in the next? Who would not  
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mend his pace, who is assured that every step brings him nearer to heaven?

What a mighty cordial will this be, under the sharpest afflictions, to consider that God meaneth us no hurt; but, on the contrary, hath pledged his faithfulness, to make them all work together for our good? One who hath eternal life in the eye of his faith and hope, can look through tribulation, and see sunshine at the back of the darkest cloud.

And then what comfort does it give in the hour of death? How miserable is the soul that must be turned out of doors shiftless and harbourless, and is not provided of an everlasting habitation, or a better place to go to; but assurance makes the soul to triumph over the grave, and take death cheerfully by the cold hand, and even long to be gone, and to be with Christ. Dark and doubting Christians may indeed shrink back, and be afraid of the exchange; but the assured soul desires to depart, and needs as much patience to live, as other men do to die. Let us then, my brethren, press after this attainment, and not only seek to be in safety, but to know that we are so. And as it is a gift of God, let us, by

humble and importunate prayer, ask it of him who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not. And,

*Last* of all, let those who have got this invaluable mercy, improve it for those purposes for which it was bestowed. ‘ I will run the way of thy commandments,’ said the Psalmist, ‘ when thou hast enlarged my heart.’ Make swift progress in the way of duty, if you desire the continuance of this comfortable privilege. Let it appear to all that your conversation is in heaven. Live above this world, and be daily ‘ adding to your faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ; and to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity :’ And then shall an entrance be administered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

## S E R M O N XVI.

I. JOHN, iv. 9.

*In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*

**T**HE value of different truths, like that of all other objects, is to be estimated by the different degrees of their usefulness and importance. Judging by this rule, there are none which better deserve our attention, than those which relate to the character of the Supreme Being. If our ideas of him be different from what he really is, it is impossible that we can love him truly, or serve him with acceptance. There may be qualities in the imaginary being which we adore, utterly repugnant with the perfections of the true God; and the mode of worship by which we strive to please him, may of consequence be as ab-

furd as the ideas which we entertain of his character. Various are the means which God hath provided for guiding us to the true knowledge of himself. The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy works. The invisible things of him, even his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen, being perceived by the things which he hath made. His moral perfections may be learned from his general administration of the world, and especially from his conduct towards his rational creatures. Had we capacities sufficient to take a comprehensive view of all his works and ways, such a review would result in a full conviction, that righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne, and that mercy and truth continually go before him. But as we see only a small part of the great system which he is carrying on, and of consequence are liable to mistaken and partial conceptions, he hath been graciously pleased to rest his character on one great fact, which it is impossible to misunderstand. This fact the Apostle places in our view in the passage before us. He is engaged in an argument for his favourite doctrine  
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of univerfal benevolence. To enforce this doctrine, he reminds his readers of the love and benevolence of God, and of this he can find no other way to exprefs his ftrong conceptions, than by denominating him love and goodnefs itfelf. ‘ Beloved,’ faith he, at the 7th verfe, ‘ let us love one another, for love ‘ is of God, and every one that loveth is born ‘ of God, and knoweth God. He that lov- ‘ eth not knoweth not God, for God is love.’ To prove this, he enters into no refined difquifitions, or abftraft reasonings, on the divine nature. Thefe, he knew, were but little adapted to the general apprehenfions of mankind. He thinks it fufficient to appeal for a proof of it to that wonderful expedient which God devifed for faving loft finners. ‘ In this,’ fays he, ‘ was manifested the love ‘ of God towards us, becaufe that God fent ‘ his only begotten Son into the world, that ‘ we might live through him.’ Thefe words then imply,

I. That the redemption of mankind was an act of the freeft and moft unmerited grace.

II. That it is a full demonstration of the unbounded love and goodness of God.

As these are truths of the greatest importance, and very properly suited to our meditation at this time \*, I will lay the evidence of them before you in as clear a manner as I can, and then conclude with an application of the subject.

I. Then, the text implies, That the redemption of mankind was an act of the freest and most unmerited grace. God was under no obligation to provide a Saviour for his fallen creatures. Without any imputation on his justice, he might have left them to eat the fruit of their own doings, and to be filled with their own devices. He stood in no need of our services, nor could he be injured by our rebellion. Our perdition would have made no blank in his works, which his power could not have supplied in one moment. Man was indeed miserable enough to excite compassion; but he was deservedly so, and therefore compassion might have been restrained, and  
justice

\* Preached at the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

justice have had its course. He had left the station in which he was placed; insolently thrown off his dependence on his Maker; questioned his veracity, and dared his power. Nothing, therefore, but sovereign mercy could have interposed for his relief. But to make this point perfectly clear, let it be observed,

1<sup>st</sup>, That God's designs of mercy could not arise from his thinking the constitution he had made with Adam as the head and representative of his posterity, severe and unrighteous. It is certain, on the contrary, that had it not been holy, just, and good, God could never have been the author of it; and if it was once righteous, no failure on the part of his creatures could alter its nature. There is no insinuation that God changed his opinion of that transaction, or that he hath ceased to consider man as justly condemned by the first covenant. In fact, the method of our recovery through Jesus Christ, contains a virtual ratification of the sentence by which we were condemned: For it hath appointed the second Adam to be the head of an elect world, that through the merit of his sufferings and death, mercy might be dispensed to the guilty, in a  
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consistency with the rectitude of the divine nature, and the honour of his law.

*2dly*, God was not moved to provide a Saviour for his creatures, by any sense, that his law was too strict in its demands, for them to be able to obey. We find that the word of God still denounces a curse on every deviation from that perfect rule.— There is no mitigation of the penalties annexed to disobedience. The law which requires perfect obedience is in full force. The exactions of justice are not in the least abated. How indeed is it possible that they could? for consider how the case stands. God is infinitely amiable and perfect; and what does he require of his creatures, but that they should love him with all the soul, strength, and heart, which he hath given them. Can this ever cease to be an obligation? What should make it cease? Nothing, but that God should become less amiable, that his perfections should fade, his goodness be exhausted, or his greatness impaired. On the other hand, What is it that he threatens to those who withdraw their hearts from him? Is it not the loss of his favour and friendship? Can either  
the

the obligation or penalty be accused of severity? Surely in this God does nothing unbecoming a wise and righteous governor. Nay, with reverence be it said, he could not do otherwise without denying himself. Is it conceivable that he should retract his word, that he should compound, like earthly creditors, for a part of what is owing him; that he should depreciate the honour of his law; or dispense with the exactions of his justice? No, he hath said, and never will unsay it, 'That the wages of sin is death;' but he hath purposed to display his compassion to fallen man, in a manner that should reconcile all his perfections. 'And in this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that he hath sent his Son into the world, that we might live through him.'

*3dly*, The inability to perform his duty, which man contracted by his fall, did not render his case in the least more deserving of compassion. This inability, as it proceeds entirely from the depravity of our tempers, and the enmity of our hearts, can only serve to render us more vile and odious in his sight. Had we, indeed, lost the affection of love altogether,

together, had our natural powers been quite destroyed by the fall, our case might have moved compassion; but this case was not ours. The affection of love still remains, and we exert it with ardour and vivacity towards a variety of objects. Our natural powers, though impaired, are not destroyed, for we employ them successfully in our worldly concerns; so that our inability to love God, when translated into its true language, amounts just to this, that we love those things which are contrary to his nature so much, that it is impossible we can love him; and how this should extenuate our guilt, let those who plead it explain.

*4thly*, God was not moved to this act of unmerited grace, by any foreknowledge he had that mankind would receive it with thankfulness. He foresaw, as appears by the prophetic writings, the ingratitude and contempt that would be poured on his Son. He foresaw that he should be despised and rejected of men; that his person should be insulted, his name derided, his blood shed, and the calls of his grace rejected. All this was full in his eye, when he laid the plan of our redemption;

tion; so that in all views, you see it was an act of the freest and most unmerited grace. It took its rise from no good in the creature, either existing or foreseen. Unmerited, unsolicited, and ill requited, the fountain of all this grace was in God himself; for his goodness is like himself, unsearchable. ‘ His thoughts are not our thoughts, neither his ways our ways.’ I proceed now, in the

II. Place, to shew that the redemption of mankind is a full demonstration of the unbounded love and goodness of the Divine nature. ‘ In this,’ saith the Apostle, ‘ was the love of God manifested towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.’ Consider then,

1<sup>st</sup>, The dignity of the person whom God sent on this gracious errand. Had he sent one of the meanest of his servants to sympathise with us in our forlorn state, it would have been an act of great condescension and goodness. Had he commissioned one of the least considerable of those spirits who surround his throne, to minister some relief to us in our miserable situation,

situation, with what gratitude ought we to have received such an instance of his compassionate regard. But who is this that cometh in the name of the Lord to save us? What are his rank, his titles, and dignity? Let a Prophet declare: ‘Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.’—Let an Evangelist declare—‘The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.’—Let an apostle declare—‘God who at fundry times, and in divers manners, spake to our fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son from heaven—who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.’ Or if all these testimonies are insufficient, let it be declared by a voice from the excellent Majesty, ‘This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.’ Such was the person whom God sent to save us. ‘In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten

‘ gotten Son’—but whether did he send this divine person. This is a

*2d* Circumstance, that cannot fail to heighten our gratitude. He sent him into this lower world. He came from heaven to earth, from the throne to the foot-stool, from the bosom of his Father to this guilty and polluted world, which deserved to be visited with an executioner of justice, instead of an herald of peace. And in what circumstances did he appear on earth? Was it in the pomp of royalty, to receive the homage and services of his creatures? No, his life on earth was one continued scene of suffering. From his birth to his death, he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was even so destitute of the common accommodations of life, that he said of himself, ‘ The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.’ Yet these sufferings, though great, were light in comparison with what he afterwards underwent. The bitterest sorrows which the common lot of humanity knows, admit some intervals of ease and relief. At worst, the mind of man, in its most oppressed moments,

moments, anticipates the bright side of things ; or, ignorant of futurity, feels but the weight of the present moment. But this consolation of human weakness, the prophetic mind of Jesus did not admit. He foresaw the approaching hour of suffering, and was fully aware of every bitter ingredient in the cup that was prepared for him to drink. He beheld the lowering cloud of darkness and distress. He knew the malice of his enemies, the perfidy of his betrayer, and the unfaithfulness of his friends. He saw the accursed tree, the torturing scourge, the piercing nails, the hour and the power of darkness.

Behold him in that unutterable conflict, which wrung from him those complaining accents, ‘ My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.’ Behold him at his Father’s footstool, offering up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him. Behold him going forth to meet his enemies ; receiving the treacherous kiss ; stretching forth his hands to the shackles ; forsaken of all his friends ; buffeted, scourged, and spit upon ; at last nailed  
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to a cross, and insulted even in his expiring moments with a derision of his woe. When you have beheld this complicated scene of anguish, say if there was ever sorrow like unto this sorrow; and yet far beyond all this must have been those mysterious feelings of the Son of God, when he cried out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.'

Such was the treatment which the Son of God met with on earth, and which he was prepared to meet with for our sakes; and can we doubt, after this, of the love of God in sending him into the world. 'Greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend; but herein God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' Consider, in the

3<sup>d</sup> Place, the gracious design on which he came into the world. It was, 'that we might live through him.' Life, you know, is the most important of blessings, and the foundation of all other enjoyments. To purchase life, we reckon no expence or loss too great. 'Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life.' But life, in Scripture

language, is generally used to signify happiness in general, and in this sense it is to be understood in the text. It is here opposed to all that misery which we had brought upon ourselves by our apostacy from God. By nature we are dead in law, lying under a sentence of condemnation, the execution of which is only suspended by the brittle thread of life. We are also spiritually dead, alienated from the fountain of life and happiness, dead in trespasses and sins. To complete our miserable situation, we are liable to the second death, that awful death which subjects both soul and body to everlasting punishment in the world to come. Now, the death of Christ delivers us from all these evils. By him all who believe on his name are freed from condemnation, and obtain a right to live: 'For Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' Through him we also are made spiritually alive, 'You hath he quickened,' saith St Paul to the Ephesians, 'who were dead in trespasses and sins.—The old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed; that henceforth we should not serve sin.'

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To crown all, through him we have the gift of eternal life, being begotten again into the lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefilled, and that fadeth not away.

And is there now ought wanting to demonstrate the unbounded love and goodness of God? How warmly does Hezekiah speak; with what gratitude does he express himself, on a few years being added to his natural life? — ‘The living, the living they shall praise thee, as I do this day. The fathers to, the children shall declare thy truth. Upon a stringed instrument will I praise thee, and upon the harp with a solemn sound.’ What then ought to be our feelings of gratitude; what ought to be our language of praise, to whom God hath granted length of days for evermore?

I have thus endeavoured to shew you, that the redemption of mankind is an act of the freest grace; and that it is a full demonstration of the unbounded love and goodness of God.

From what hath been said, the first and most obvious inference is, Our obligation to

love that God who hath thus loved us. And is he not worthy of this affection in himself? Has the perfection of beauty and goodness no charms to move us, while with so much ardour we run after the faint traces of these qualities in creation? Especially what are our hearts made of, if they can resist the impression of a benefit so inestimable as I have been describing, conferred with a bounty that even prevented our requests. We value ourselves, we esteem others, for their grateful and affectionate feelings: We can hardly entertain any regard for a character in which we see no marks of sensibility. Shall this defect, then, excite our disapprobation in all cases, excepting in that where it is most glaring and odious? Shall we exert our affections with ardour on many inferior objects, and reserve none for him whose power made us, and whose goodness has made us happy? You excuse yourselves, perhaps, by saying, that your affections are engaged to your friends and benefactors, because they are objects of perception, and you have seen and conversed with them; whereas God is unseen and spiritual, so that your feelings with regard to him

him

him cannot be so lively. Is nothing, then, an object of your affections, but what you have seen with your bodily eyes? Is it only the outward form of your friend that you love? Is it only the hand that confers the benefit, or the feet that move to serve you? Is it not rather the soul, the heart of your friend, that engages your love? even that kindness which never fails, that sincerity which you can always trust, that faithfulness on which you can at all times depend, that sympathy which makes your griefs and joys his own? Do you cease to love your friend after his body is laid in the dust? Sure I am, none who ever knew a friend will say so.

It is then the soul that engages affection— And is not the soul invisible? Are you not as certain of the existence of God, as you are of your own soul's existence, or the souls of those you converse with? True it is, that God is not to be discerned by our senses; But is he then afar off? Doth he not fill heaven and earth with his presence? Do not kindness, faithfulness, and sympathy, belong to his character, more than to any earthly friend? Who is it that hath said, ' I will ne-

‘ ver leave thee nor forsake thee?’ Who is it that hath said, ‘ Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me?’ Who is it that hath desired us to cast all our care upon him, because he careth for us? Who is it that hath said, ‘ He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of mine eye?’ Say not, then, I cannot love God, because I have not seen him; say rather, if thou hast the heart to say so, I cannot love God, because that love is already engaged to his rivals. I love the world too much; I love my sins too much, *i. e.* I love his enemies too much, to have any remaining affections to bestow on him. In the

*2d* Place. We may infer from what hath been said, If God so loved us while we were enemies, how much more will he love us, now that we are reconciled to him by the death of his Son? There are but few points on which I am sanguine enough to think I could argue to the conviction of a person disposed to evade the force of evidence; yet if there is any, I think it is in proof of this sentiment of the Apostle, ‘ He that spared not his own

‘ Son, but gave him up to the death for us.

‘ all,

all, how shall he not with him also freely 'give us all things.' Allow me that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might have life through him; and then say, is there another favour so costly, that you should think it beyond the reach of his benevolence? You may perhaps say, that he hath already done so much, that you cannot conceive how he should do more. But I will ask you this, Why did he confer the first favour? Was it only to save appearances to his creatures? Do you conceive of it as of that constrained kind of benevolence which we sometimes see in the world; a man paying the debts of another, and then setting him adrift to do as he best can in the world? No, I will tell you what it rather resembles, if a resemblance to it can be found in this selfish world. It resembles a man taking up a helpless orphan. He at first clothes and feeds him; by and bye he conceives an attachment for him. Having done so much, he is unwilling to leave his work imperfect; he makes him worthy of his care, by instilling good principles into him. In time he adopts him into his family; at last he makes him his

heir, and leaves him all he has. Whoever knows the human heart, knows that this is the natural progress of affection. He that gives, cherisheth his own benevolence by the gift; and to have conferred one favour is a reason for continuing and adding others. I say not this, as if God's thoughts were to be measured by ours. I have a better warrant for using this comparison—'being confident,' as an Apostle has expressed it, 'of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.—Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God—and if sons, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.—God commended 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: 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.'

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But here, my brethren, I find the subject rising and widening beyond the reach of my thoughts, or feeble illustrations. ‘How great, O God, is that 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.’

One other inference from what hath been said we cannot omit, being the inference of the Apostle himself in the context. ‘Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.’ I will not inquire whether this is an exhortation to universal benevolence, or an exhortation to Christians to love their brethren; certain it is, that the disciples of Christ are exhorted to both of these amiable dispositions. Of whom are we bold enough to say, that he may not be one of those for whom Christ died; that he may not become, through grace, one of the excellent ones of the earth? If thou art a vessel of mercy, consider who it was that filled thee; and may not the same fountain fill him—fill any of the race of Adam? Let your benevolence, then, extend to the whole of mankind: but let your love be special towards  
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the household of faith. Love them for the image they bear—love them for the ties by which you are connected together. Let your love to them be fervent and active. Impart to them every assistance of friendship, especially of that friendship which regards the interests of their souls. Exhort one another daily, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Continue together in one accord, in prayer and supplication, forwarding one another in your way to Zion, and singing songs of comfort as you go along.

On the whole, you see how much the religion of Christ applies itself to the best affections of the human heart. To whom does it direct our worship?—To the God of love, the God who is love, and who manifested his love to us, in that he sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. What doth it require of us, but that we should love him who first loved us; that we should yield ourselves to be his, and trust in him for all good things. Are ye willing? The pledges of the covenant are at hand, and may God seal them to your souls. Amen.

## S E R M O N XVII.

ACTS viii. 39.

*— and he went on his way rejoicing.*

**T**HE person of whom this account is given was a man of Ethiopia, who possessed a place of great trust and authority under the queen of that country. It appears from the history, that he was a profelyte to the Jewish religion; for he had come as far as Jerusalem, to attend on the worship of the God of Israel. The manner of his conversion to Christianity, by the ministry of Philip the Evangelist, is circumstantially related in the preceding verses; and as there are several striking incidents in this passage of history, I shall point out a few of them which are chiefly remarkable.

*1<sup>st</sup>*, We are told, that when this officer of the Ethiopian queen was about to take his departure from Jerusalem, God sent his angel  
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to Philip at Samaria, with a peremptory order to leave that place, and to travel southward, till he should come upon the road that goeth down from Jerufalem to Gaza ; which place he had no sooner reached, than, lo, the illustrious stranger appears in his chariot, pursuing his journey to his own country.

*2dly*, It deserves our notice, that at the precise moment when Philip, by a divine impulse, ran to meet him, this devout profelyte was reading aloud a part of *Isaiah's* prophecy, which speaks plainly and directly concerning the *Messiah*. The place of Scripture which he read was this : ‘ He was led as a sheep to  
 ‘ the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before  
 ‘ his shearer, so opened he not his mouth : In  
 ‘ his humiliation his judgment was taken  
 ‘ away, and who shall declare his generation,  
 ‘ for his life is taken from the earth.’ Upon hearing these words, Philip accosted him with this question, ‘ Understandest thou what thou  
 ‘ readest ?’ The other ingenuously confessed that he did not ; and having, with uncommon courtesy, taken the Evangelist up into his chariot, begged to be informed who the person was whom the prophet had in his eye.

‘ Then,

‘ Then, ’ as we read in the 35th verse, ‘ Phi-  
‘ lip opened his mouth, and began at the  
‘ same Scripture, and preached unto him Je-  
‘ sus.’

Thus both the preacher and his subject were very remarkably ordered in the providence of God ; and, as might be expected from such favourable presages, the discourse was accompanied with the powerful influences of his grace : For upon their coming to a certain place where there was water, the new disciple, of his own accord, modestly signified his desire to be baptized ; and after professing his faith in Christ, in these few but solemn words, ‘ I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son  
‘ of God.’—The chariot was stopt, and Philip went down with him into the water, and baptized him. A

3<sup>d</sup> Incident, no less remarkable than the former two, is recorded in the verse where my text lies. ‘ When they were come up  
‘ out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord  
‘ caught away Philip, that the Eunuch saw  
‘ him no more.’ How admirable, how perfect are the works of God ! These two were brought together by the agency of an angel, and  
now

now they are parted afunder by a miracle ; but a miracle of wisdom as well as of power. For this sudden and supernatural removal of the preacher, was a powerful confirmation of the doctrine which he taught, and had an obvious tendency to impress on the mind of the new convert this important truth, that although a man had been employed as the instrument of his conversion, yet the work itself was truly divine, and the glory of it due to God alone.

Accordingly we learn, from the latter part of the verse, that all these wonderful events had a most happy influence on his mind. He was transported with what he had seen, and heard, and experienced ; his judgment approved the wise choice he had made, and he went on his way rejoicing. He went on his way, *i. e.* he proceeded on his journey homeward. The new persuasion he had received into his mind, did not mislead him into fanciful plans of action, inconsistent with, or perhaps opposite to, the duties of his station. No, he knew that the religion he had embraced, instead of releasing him from these duties, rather bound him to a more faithful  
and

and diligent performance of them. He therefore went on his way, and he rejoiced as he went. He felt his soul enriched with heavenly grace. He had now got a treasure which he could properly call his own, even that pearl of great price, with which all the treasures of Ethiopia were not worthy to be compared.

Your condition, my brethren, is in several respects similar to the condition of this man. He had solemnly avouched the Lord to be his God: You, with equal solemnity, have this day done the same. He had just received one seal of the covenant of grace: You, this day, have received the other\*. He had a long journey before him: Ye also are travellers through this wilderness, toward the promised land of rest. In these circumstances I think that, without apology, I may take occasion, from the words that have been read, to address you with a twofold exhortation;

- I. To go on your way heavenward. And,
- II. To rejoice as you go.

I

\* Preached after the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

I trust I need hardly inform you, that the spiritual repast to which you have been this day admitted, is purely intended to strengthen you in your journey to the heavenly country. God sends us these grapes from the Canaan above, not to detain us in the wilderness, but to allure us out of it, and to make us hasten our steps towards that country of which they are the natural and spontaneous product. My first exhortation, therefore, is both seasonable and necessary.—Arise and go forward. Many who mistake the nature of this ordinance, are very anxious and busy for a few days, in making a sort of formal preparation for it. Then their countenances are demure, and their steps are solemn, and their conversation is precise, and their attendance upon the most protracted services of devotion indefatigable; and this they call religion, and trust in its merit to absolve them from all the dishonest, worldly, uncharitable, and ungodly practices, of which they are guilty in the other periods of their time. But I trust, my brethren, that ye have not so learned Christ, and I trust that we, who are your spiritual guides, shall never encourage you in so fatal a delusion. I address

dress you now, as the disciples and friends of Christ. I speak to you in his name, and that his authority may be the more unquestionable in the exhortation I am to give you, I shall deliver it in the very words which his own Spirit hath employed. ‘ I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.’ And beware of a sinful conformity to this world, ‘ but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.—As ye have this day received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him,’ in a manner suitable to the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.—Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.’ Think not that

ye ‘ have already attained ; but this one thing  
‘ do ye, forgetting those things which are be-  
‘ hind, and reaching forth unto those things  
‘ which are before, press towards the mark,  
‘ for the prize of the high calling of God in  
‘ Christ Jesus.—And I beseech you, brethren,  
‘ that every one of you do shew the same  
‘ diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto  
‘ the end ; that ye be not slothful, but fol-  
‘ lowers of them who through faith and pa-  
‘ tience do now inherit the promises.—What-  
‘ soever things are true, whatsoever things are  
‘ honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever  
‘ things are pure, whatsoever things are love-  
‘ ly, whatsoever things are of good report, if  
‘ there be any virtue, and if there be any  
‘ praise, think on these things.—And let your  
‘ path resemble that of the just—a shining  
‘ light, that shineth more and more unto the  
‘ perfect day.—Finally, my brethren, be  
‘ strong in the Lord, and in the power of his  
‘ might. Put on the whole armour of God,  
‘ that ye may be able to stand against the  
‘ wiles of the devil—having your loins girt  
‘ about with truth, and having on the breast-  
‘ plate of righteousness, and your feet shod  
‘ with

' with the preparation of the gospel of peace ;  
 ' above all taking the shield of faith, where-  
 ' with ye shall be able to quench all the fiery  
 ' darts of the wicked. And take the helmet  
 ' of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit,  
 ' which is the word of God : Praying always  
 ' with all prayer and supplication in the Spi-  
 ' rit, and watching thereunto with all perfe-  
 ' verance.'

These few passages of Scripture, which speak to us directly as *soldiers* and *travellers*, who, under the conduct and tuition of the great Captain of Salvation, must force their way to the Zion above, fully express the meaning of my first exhortation ; and as they are not my words, but the words of the living and true God, the divine authority with which they are marked, must necessarily imply our obligation to obey them, and consequently give a greater weight to my present address, than any arguments that I could possibly devise. Let me therefore once more repeat the exhortation, and call upon you to make progress in your Christian course. Let your present attainments, instead of satisfying you, only incite your zeal and ambition to

rife still higher in the excellencies of the divine life. Carry ever in your minds, that the design of the solemn and instrumental duties of religion is to beget and strengthen those principles and habits of goodness in your souls, by which they will be gradually ripened for the life of heaven. Stir up your faith to behold him who is invisible, that you may walk before him in the light of the living, having no other anxiety but to do what he commands; no other ambition but to enjoy his favour now, and to receive his approbation at last. Let your meditation on those sufferings of the Redeemer, which ye have been shewing forth to-day, instruct you what you are to expect in the present life, and how you ought to behave under all its trials and afflictions. Do not flatter yourselves with the prospect of uninterrupted ease, and unclouded enjoyment; but consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, when at any time ye are weary or faint in your minds: And study to know him in the power of his resurrection, and in the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death. Exercise yourselves daily in mortifying the  
deeds

deeds of the body ; in crucifying the flesh, with its affections and lusts ; and in opposing your inclinations as often as they oppose your duty. Thus labouring to be examples of patience, meekness, contentment, and to come behind in no good thing to which you are called ; go on in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only : ‘ And may the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.’

Having thus exhorted you to continue your progress in the good ways of God, let me now exhort you, in the

II. Place, to rejoice as you go on.

After all the comfortable topics that have been suggested to your meditation in the solemn service in which we have been engaged, it should be almost unnecessary to recall to

your minds any of those copious sources of joy which belong to the redeemed of the Lord. Yet lest there should be some mind so dark, some apprehension so slow, as to be at a loss in discovering its own comforts ; I will mention, in their order, a few of those that are most obvious and solid, and best fitted to fill the mind with peace and joy in believing. In the

*1<sup>st</sup>* Place then, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, (and to those only who have had this experience do I speak), then rejoice that ye have passed from death to life, and that there is now no condemnation for them who are in Christ Jesus. Rejoice in that distinguishing grace which hath plucked you as brands from the burning, which hath brought up your soul from the grave, which hath kept you alive, that you should not go down into the pit. Look around among your fellow creatures, and behold the multitudes who walk in the broad way that leadeth to destruction, who go on headstrong and blindfold in the paths of folly, until their eyes are opened in the everlasting burnings. Then consider your own better choice and safer condition,  
and

and rejoice in that mercy which found you, when you were wandering from peace and happiness, which arrested you in your mad career, and brought you back to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. In the

2d Place, rejoice that you have not only passed from death to life, but are also advanced to the dearest and most intimate relation to all the Persons of the everblessed Godhead. By your new birth ye are become the sons of God, members of Christ, and temples for the Holy Ghost. And what an overflowing source of consolation is this? Can there be any cause of fear or disquietude to those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty? Can *they* want any good thing, of whom God hath taken the charge as his peculiar property, and for whom he provides as for his own? Is not his wisdom sufficient to guide you through all the perplexing paths of life? Is not his power sufficient to support you under every danger and difficulty? Is not his goodness sufficient to bestow on you all things richly to enjoy?—In what shape, then, can

any real evil assail you; or what imperfection can there be in your prospects of felicity? In the

3<sup>d</sup> Place, rejoice that God hath made with you an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure. He hath not only assured you, in general, of his good will and gracious purposes on your behalf; but hath also given you a variety of exceeding great and precious promises, so that there can be no possible exigence in your situation, in which you may not find a suitable and abundant relief, in these gracious assurances of a faithful God.

Were I to descend to particulars, it would be necessary for me to repeat the greater part of this sacred book, every page of which contains some reviving declaration of what God hath already done, or promised to do, for his people. And, ‘ the words of God are pure  
 ‘ words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth  
 ‘ purified seven times.—He is the rock, his  
 ‘ work is perfect, and all his ways are judg-  
 ‘ ment; a God of truth, and without iniqui-  
 ‘ ty, just and right is he.’ Have not those, then, good cause to rejoice, who have such an ample charter put into their hands by the  
 King

King of kings, a charter investing them with a full and unalterable right to every necessary blessing, even to all the unsearchable riches of Christ. In the

*4th* Place, rejoice that the life which is begun in you is an immortal principle, that can never be extinguished. Ye are born again by the Spirit of God; and ye are kept by his mighty power, through faith unto salvation. United as you are to Christ, by a living faith, ye can never perish. His charge to preserve you, is as strict and binding, as his charge to redeem and renew you at first. Ye were given unto him from eternity, by his heavenly Father, and will he not keep those whom the Father hath committed to him? Hear his own words: 'All that the Father hath given me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out.' Christ formed in the heart of a true believer, resembles, in some measure, Christ incarnate in the world. The divine nature may be obscured for a season; it may, and probably will, have its season of humiliation: But though it may seem to die, yet it shall have its resurrection likewise, and afterwards its ascension into glory.

ry. This it was that enabled Paul to say, ' I therefore run, not as uncertainly ; so fight ' I, not as one that beateth the air.' Perseverance is not only the duty, but the privilege also of all who set themselves in good earnest to travel for heaven. And though the law of God obliges them, and their new nature inclines them, to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, yet they have a far better security for their success than any efforts of their own. Omnipotence is their guardian ; ' the eternal God is their refuge, ' and underneath them his everlasting arms.'

My brethren, time and strength would fail me, were I to attempt enumerating all the sources of joy which belong to the redeemed of the Lord. I trust, that in your own frequent meditation you revolve them, and that in your frequent addresses to the throne of grace, you commemorate them with thankful hearts before the God and Father of your Lord Jesus Christ. Do you not then express the joy and gratitude of your souls, for the benefit of your Redeemer's example ; for the promised aids of his Spirit ; for the assurance of his intercession ; for the  
gracious

gracious appointment of him as the Judge of the world ; for the access you now have by him to the throne of grace ; for the means of communion with the Father of your spirits, and the pleasing fellowship of those who are travelling with you in the same road to the Zion above. Leaving these, then, to be revolved in your own minds, I will now only exhort you, in the

*5th* and *last* place, To rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ‘ Fear not, little flock,’ said the blessed Jesus, ‘ for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.’ Ere long your trials and sufferings shall come to an end, and your light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall be followed by an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory. At present we come from scenes of anxiety and vexation to keep our solemn feasts ; and our wedding garments are stained with the pollution, or torn with the briars through which we travel. Even amidst our most sublime delights, we are conscious of a certain blank in our feelings, which reminds us that this is not our rest : But in the presence of God there is fulness of joy, and at  
his

his right hand are pleasures for evermore. The poor afflicted broken spirit, which now breathes in trouble as in its daily air, and scarcely knows any other rule for computing the periods of time, than by the revolutions of sorrows and disappointments, shall then be tuned to the high praises of God; and its love to him who is the Lord of love, shall feel no bounds, and fear no end. O how the unveiled glory of God will then brighten many a face which is now darkened with grief, and stained with tears, and daily wears the hue of melancholy!—There is not a sorrowful countenance in all the Courts of Zion's King; their doubts and fears have dropt off with the veil of mortality, and sorrow and sighing have fled far away. Lift up your heads, then, ye that travel towards the heavenly Zion, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. It is not more certain that the sun doth shine in the firmament, than that ye shall live for ever in the heavenly Jerusalem, and join the innumerable company about the throne, in the everlasting praise of your God and your Redeemer. Then shall you understand the happiness of believers, and  
know

know better than I can tell you, what God did for your souls, when he called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Rejoice then in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice. Let it appear, by the serenity of your countenance, and the alacrity of your steps, that your salvation is already begun, and that though the fulness of your joys be reserved for another world, yet even in this you can remark, with a satisfaction unknown to the mere sons of earth, how sweet is the face of nature, how delicious are the fruits of the field. ‘Go your way, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth your work.’  
Amen.

S E R-

## S E R M O N XVIII.

HEBREWS, v. 12.

*For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.*

**T**HE Apostle having, at the 10th verse, compared, in general terms, the priesthood of Jesus with that of Melchisedek, finds himself obliged to break off the argument, not from any defect of his own knowledge, but from the dulness of those to whom he wrote. Their minds were not as yet prepared for such sublime instruction, and that not owing to any natural infirmity, but merely to their neglect or misimprovement of the best advantages. ‘ For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one  
‘ teach

' teach you again which be the first principles  
 ' of the oracles of God; and are become  
 ' such as have need of milk, and not of strong  
 ' meat.' Accordingly, he tells them very  
 plainly, how disgracefully deficient they were  
 in the improvement which might have been  
 expected, from the time that they had been in  
 the school of Christ. Instead of being in a  
 capacity of teaching others, they were them-  
 selves in the lowest class of learners. Instead  
 of making progress in the knowledge of di-  
 vine truth, they had forgotten what they once  
 possessed. Instead of growing to the stature  
 of perfect men in Christ Jesus, they had  
 shrunk again to the condition of babes, whose  
 weak and tender organs must be nourished  
 with the simplest food. Instead of expand-  
 ing with a regular and solid growth, opening,  
 and enlarging; their faculties, through disuse,  
 had become so contracted as to refuse admit-  
 tance to the plainest truths, much more to  
 doctrines so deep and involved as those which  
 he had begun to state. Such is the spirit of  
 the Apostle's reproof, contained in the text:  
 ' For when for the time ye ought to be  
 ' teachers, ye have need that one teach you  
 ' again

‘ again which be the first principles of the  
‘ oracles of God; and are become such as  
‘ have need of milk, and not of strong meat.’

The case of the Hebrews, as represented in these words, is by no means singular. The neglect, at least the slow improvement, of the means of knowledge, has not ceased to be a reproach in these latter days. Although blessed with the most abundant means of becoming wise unto salvation, how trifling are our attainments; how ill arranged are our religious ideas; how little established are we in the faith; and how ill qualified to give a good reason of the hope that is in us? Amidst all these infirmities, how disdainful are we often of common truths; how desirous to be gratified with novel speculations; how fantastical in our taste for religious instruction. I hope I may be allowed to offer some observations on these topics, without being supposed to aim at any peculiar censure, my sole design being to stir you up to further improvements, even to aspire to the wisdom of the perfect, and of those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

The

The text naturally gives rise to the three following observations :

I. That all who are favoured with the light of the gospel, shall be utterly inexcusable, if their improvements in knowledge do not bear a proportion to the time they have continued to enjoy it.

II. That those who are not careful to add to their knowledge, will be in great danger of losing what they have formerly acquired.

III. That without a proper acquaintance with the first plain principles of religion, men are unfit to receive doctrines of a higher and more speculative nature.

These observations I will confirm by some reasoning, and then make a practical application of the subject. The

I. Observation was, that all who are favoured with the light of the gospel, shall be utterly inexcusable, if their improvements in knowledge do not bear a proportion to the time they have continued to enjoy it.

This is one of those propositions which neither needs nor will admit of much positive proof.

There cannot be a plainer dictate of common sense, than what our Saviour hath taught us in these words: 'Unto whomsoever much is given, of him the more shall be required.' Every advantage bestowed on us by providence is a trust, of which we must give an account hereafter. The advantages which tend to our improvement in heavenly wisdom, are a trust of the most important kind; and therefore the guilt of neglecting or abusing these, must be of the deepest nature. But let us hear what may be said in opposition to this. Every objection that can be stated may be resolved into one or other of these two— Either that Christianity is not worthy of our study; or that, from its incomprehensible nature, it is impossible to make any considerable progress in the knowledge of it. To maintain the first of these, is in fact to deny the divinity of our holy religion: For certainly a revelation proceeding from infinite wisdom, with this merciful intention, to direct wandering sinners to everlasting and unspeakable felicity, must be allowed to deserve all the time and attention we can possibly bestow on it. As to the second objection, relating to the mysterious

terious nature of Christianity, it must partly be admitted, but in no sense that will apply to the point in question. There are indeed doctrines taught in it far surpassing the extent of our understandings, which must be received with the obedience of faith, resting on this solid principle of reason, that they are revealed by him who cannot lie. But though there are deep and inscrutable mysteries in Christianity, it is far from being mysterious in all its parts. Its discoveries of the moral character of God, and of his gracious purposes toward the human race; its precepts, promises, and sanctions; and its general influence upon human conduct, present the noblest and most improving subject of contemplation, in which the faculties of man can be engaged. In these a well formed mind will taste a pleasure and satisfaction far beyond what all the treasures of science and philosophy can bestow. It is true, that even in this study, certain difficulties will at first be experienced; but shall it form an objection to the pursuit of heavenly wisdom, that it bears an analogy to every improvement of which the human mind is susceptible? Where is the valuable advantage

that is to be acquired without patience, method, and application? Shall we expect to become masters of religious truth, with less diligence and application than we bestow on the most trifling science, or the meanest mechanic art? I mean not that it is either necessary or possible for every private Christian to attain a thorough knowledge of theology. The leisure and the capacities of men are so different, that an equal progress in divine knowledge cannot be supposed in every individual. This much, however, may be reasonably required and expected, that persons soliciting the outward privileges of religion, should know the great truths to which these privileges refer—should be able to tell what benefit they expect from them—should be able to shew some fruit of all the instructions they receive. Yet how often is even this moderate expectation disappointed? How many are there to be found in this land of gospel light, almost as ignorant of Jesus and his religion, as those who never heard his name? How deep must be their shame, how heavy their condemnation, when at last it shall appear in what manner their time has been employed?

ployed? This will stop the mouths of all ignorant Christians, and expose their vain apologies, when their consciences, awakened by the dawn of an everlasting day, shall reproach them with the hours, days, and months, in which they fatigued themselves with vice and folly, instead of studying how to become wise unto salvation. The

II. Observation from the text was, That those who are not careful to add to their knowledge, are in danger of losing what they have already acquired.

This was the very case of the Hebrews. They had not been at due pains to increase their knowledge, in consequence of which neglect they were even decayed in their former attainments. ‘Ye are *become* such,’ says the Apostle, ‘as have need of milk and not of strong meat.’ He does not say, *Ye are* still in the condition of babes; but ye are returned or shrunk back again to that condition, thereby plainly intimating that there had been a time when the case was otherwise with them.

And as this proposition is well founded in the text, so it is sufficiently supported both by reason and experience. Our own observation, if we have not been extremely inattentive, cannot fail to furnish us with instances similar to what is here recorded. The truth is, a comprehensive knowledge of the whole, in all its connections, is the only security for the distinct knowledge, or remembrance of any one part. Nothing is so difficult as to retain the rudiments of any science, unless we pursue them to their proper use, and discover their subserviency to the general scheme to which they belong.

Let a man be introduced to the view of a complete piece of machinery, without being acquainted with the general purpose it is intended to accomplish; let him survey every part of it with the most minute attention, and labour to imprint the idea of each as deeply as possible in his mind; yet if he fall short of comprehending the intention of the whole, all that he has seen will be equally useless to himself and to mankind. His observations, unconnected with any leading principle, will float, without method or application in his  
mind;

mind ; or if they have any effect, it will be only to make him rash and petulant in hazarding opinions on a subject which he imperfectly understands.

Our pursuit of religious knowledge, under the disadvantages of our present dark and degenerate state, may be compared to a person swimming against the current, who has no other way to maintain his advantage, but by pressing forward. Our faculties, by disuse, contract a rust, a disability either for discerning or pursuing those things that are excellent. Hence the Apostle says, at the 14th verse, ‘ Strong meat is for those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil ;’ thereby intimating, that the mind must be kept in constant exercise, otherwise we may lose the faculty of distinguishing between things the most widely different. But this is not all :— A person who stops short in his pursuit of religious truth, plainly discovers that he has lost that relish which alone imprints it in deep and lasting characters on the mind. It is well known how slowly we imbibe, and how quickly we forget, those parts of learn-

ing which we study with reluctance. No man will be careful to preserve a matter about which he is become indifferent, especially if this cannot be done without much labour and attention. Accordingly, it is never supposed in Scripture, that we should remit our application to make farther progress, through a lazy satisfaction with our present attainments. No saint ever set such an example of indolent self-contentment. ‘ I count all things  
‘ but loss,’ said the Apostle Paul, ‘ for the  
‘ excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus  
‘ my Lord; for whom I have suffered the  
‘ loss of all things, and do count them but  
‘ dung that I may win Christ, and be found  
‘ in him, not having mine own righteousness  
‘ which is of the law, but that which is  
‘ through the faith of Christ, the righteous-  
‘ ness which is of God by faith; that I may  
‘ know him, and the power of his resurrec-  
‘ tion, and the fellowship of his sufferings,  
‘ being made conformable unto his death; if  
‘ by any means I might attain unto the re-  
‘ surrection of the dead: Not as though I had  
‘ already attained, either were already per-  
‘ fect; but I follow after, if that I may ap-  
‘ prehend

‘prehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.’ The

III. and last observation from the text was, that without a proper acquaintance with the plain principles of religion, men are utterly unfit for receiving doctrines of a higher and more speculative nature.

This is the precise argument of the text, and needs only to be mentioned to force our assent. It is saying nothing more strange, than that a person, in order to be able to read, must first know letters, a proposition so plain and obvious, that it would be ridiculous to attempt a formal proof of it. The operations of grace, as well as those of nature, are, for the most part, gradual. Miraculous gifts indeed have been enjoyed, and miraculous progress hath been made in divine knowledge, beyond what the common use of means could have

have produced; but these have been rare instances for special purposes in providence, and are by no means to be expected in the common course of things. If, therefore, we aspire to eminent knowledge in religion, we must begin by cultivating distinct apprehensions of its first principles. Nothing has been of more prejudice to Christianity, than the premature indigested reasonings of novices, about its more speculative doctrines, before they have been well established in its great and fundamental articles. Hence have arisen all those odious names with which particular sects have stigmatised one another, while, in contending for the name of disciples, they have thrown away that badge of charity by which the true disciples of Christ are most effectually distinguished.

Justly, then, does the Apostle say, that strong meat belongeth only to them who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil. The metaphor is highly proper and significant: For as strong meat, administered to a weak stomach, contributes only to increase its infirmity; in like manner, the more difficult doctrines of  
Christianity,

Christianity, meeting with weak presumptuous understandings, have no other effect than to swell the natural vanity of the heart, which afterwards vents itself in words and behaviour, equally dishonourable to God and offensive to man.

Having thus endeavoured to confirm the observations which naturally arise from the text, it remains only to make a practical application of the subject.

In this application, the hearers of the gospel seem to have the first and principal concern. Ye have enjoyed this advantage from your earliest years. For the time ye might have been teachers of others. Let us suppose that ye had attended as punctually upon instruction in any other science, Would you not be ashamed, after ten or twenty years, to own you were as ignorant as the first month, and much more ashamed to have it thought that you were contented to be so? Let me ask, How you would tolerate such carelessness and insensibility in your children, whom you educate at a great expence, for the purposes of this world? Yet how do the cases differ?  
—Much,

—Much, indeed, in one respect; for a man may be happy without human learning, but without the knowledge of religion, you must be miserable for ever, and so much the more miserable for the neglect of the opportunities which you have enjoyed. Let me beseech you to bring this home to your minds. In all other subjects you desire to be well informed. You would not prostitute your time to a ceremonial attendance of any other kind, without some solid and useful object. You would not give up four hours in every week, merely to hear words, without intending to derive some instruction from them. ‘Take heed, then, how ye hear.’ Be assured we do not speak in vain. Our defects, indeed, are many, (we do not preach nor live as we ought to do; may God pardon and amend us); but we dispense the ordinances of God, and his word, though dispensed by weak unskilful hands, shall not return void, but shall accomplish the thing whereunto he sent it; it shall either be the favour of life unto life, or of death unto death to your souls.

Again, ye have heard that they who are not careful to add to their knowledge, are in  
 danger

danger of losing what they had formerly acquired. Beware, then, of resting satisfied with your present attainments, but follow on to know the Lord. Be assiduous to improve the advantages ye possess, for growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that ye may walk worthy of God unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.—Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power; Continuing in the faith, grounded and settled, and not moved from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard.

Once more—Ye have heard, that without a proper acquaintance with the plain principles of religion, men are unfit to receive doctrines of a higher and more speculative nature. Expect not, then, that we should study your amusement at the expence of your edification. There are persons, perhaps, who expect us to discuss some nice points in casuistry, or to clear up some controverted points in divinity; in short, who would take it kindly, if, dropping the common topics, which have been long and much worn in the service  
of

of religion, we provided some fresh ones always for their entertainment. This may be very proper in its season, and, so far as it is fit, a faithful minister of Christ will not be wanting to their expectation; for he has gathered nothing in all the stores of divine knowledge, of which he is not willing that they should partake. But in common, this indulgence is entirely out of place. The plainest and most practical truths are first of all to be inculcated. Many more stand in need of these than of novelties in speculation; and even of those who call out for such, many make the demand with a very bad grace. They might be amused, perhaps, with a curious discussion; but what if their sense of divine things be dead? What if they need to have their minds stimulated, and their consciences alarmed with the terrors of God's word. When our Lord was asked, by a curious inquirer, if there were few that should be saved, instead of answering directly to the question, he addressed the person with a practical exhortation, ' Strive to enter in at the ' strait gate, for many, I say unto you, shall ' seek to enter in, and shall not be able.' If  
any

any of a similar character should attend our assemblies, let them not think it strange, if we imitate so high an example, by preferring to impart to them the plainest and simplest, because the most necessary truths; especially as it cannot be doubted that the Apostle's reproof in the text, is still applicable to many hearers of the gospel:—‘ For when for the  
‘ time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need  
‘ that one teach you again, which be the first  
‘ principles of the oracles of God; and are  
‘ become such as have need of milk, and not  
‘ of strong meat.’ Amen.

S E R-

## S E R M O N XIX.

## II. CORINTHIANS, vi. 1.

*We then, as workers together with him; beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.*

**N**OTHING can be conceived more encouraging to creatures, in our feeble and depraved situation, than those views of the Supreme Being disclosed by the Apostle, in the concluding part of the former chapter. There God is represented in the characters of condescension and grace, so perfectly suited to our necessitous and guilty condition, as must render him the object of our supreme love, and unreserved confidence.

The first question that will always occur to an awakened sinner, hath been expressed by the Prophet Micah, in these words: ‘ Where-  
 ‘ with shall I come before the Lord, and bow  
 ‘ myself before the high God?’ and the on-  
 ly

ly answer to this question, which an unenlightened mind can suggest, hath also been expressed by the same Prophet, in the form of another question, ‘ Shall I come before him  
‘ with burnt offerings, with calves of an year  
‘ old? Will the Lord be pleased with thou-  
‘ sands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers  
‘ of oil? Shall I give my first born for my  
‘ transgression, the fruit of my body for the  
‘ sin of my soul?’ A conscience alarmed with a sense of guilt, naturally represents the Most High as clothed with terrible majesty, as a God of vengeance, a stern unrelenting creditor, demanding payment even to the uttermost farthing. And however the advocates for the light of nature may boast of their discoveries, it may be pronounced impossible for unassisted reason, proceeding on sound principles, to discover any means whereby guilty creatures can hope to satisfy the justice, or regain the friendship of their Maker. All our knowledge, with regard to this subject, must flow from revelation alone. The sanctions of justice may indeed be comprehended by human reason; but justice demands inexorably the punishment of transgressors.

Justice admits no claim for the exercise of mercy. Nay more, mercy does not even come within the strict conception of legal administration ; but is an act of pure prerogative, having no other measure than the will of the sovereign. ‘ And who knoweth the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor.’ None else but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, and hath declared him unto us : And this is the name whereby he hath made him known, *God is love.*

What the Apostle says, chapter 5th verse 18. has a stronger signification than is commonly attended to, ‘ All things are of God.’ It not only imports, that all things owe their existence to God, and are the effects of his creating power ; but farther, that all the motives to exercise that power are of himself likewise. He finds them in his own perfect nature ; and every exertion of power, whether for producing being or happiness to any of his creatures, is the spontaneous act of his essential goodness and benignity. Why did God create a world ? No other answer can be given to this question, but that it was his sovereign pleasure so to do. No other reason,

son, but the same sovereign pleasure, can be assigned for man's existence on earth, with all the honours conferred on him at his first creation. And now that man hath forfeited these honours, and incurred the penalty annexed to his disobedience, whither shall we resort to find an inducement for his Creator shewing him mercy? Can rebellion, outrageous unprovoked rebellion, furnish a motive to pity? Can deformity and pollution present any attractions of love? No, it is manifest that after all our researches, we must finally have recourse to what God himself said to Moses of old, 'I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.' Upon this principle the Apostle proceeds in the passage I have quoted: 'All things are of God,' saith he, 'who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.' He it was who graciously spared those rebels whom his righteous vengeance might have crushed; and who, instead of requiring the fruit of our

body for the sin of our soul, withheld not his own Son as the ransom of our transgressions, but gave him up to the death for us, that we might live through him. Having thus by his infinite wisdom, and self-moving goodness, opened a way for extending mercy to offenders, consistent with the honour of his perfections, he proceeds to complete the gracious plan, by sending forth some of the apostate race, as ambassadors for Christ, to beseech sinners in his own name, and in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. Paul was one of these chosen instruments, and accordingly he styles himself, in the text, 'a worker together with God,' and in this character beseecheth the Corinthians, in the most earnest manner, 'not to receive the grace of God in vain.'

The same exhortation I now address to you, deeming it peculiarly seasonable, in the near view we have of celebrating that solemn ordinance of our religion, in which the grace of God appears in all its lustre and glory. It seems unnecessary to employ many words in explaining the exhortation, its meaning being so clearly ascertained by the connection in which it stands, as to be obvious to every intelligent

telligent reader. All that is needful to be observed is, that we are to look for the true import of the grace of God, which the Apostle beseecheth the Corinthians not to receive in vain, in that ministry or word of reconciliation, which he had already said was committed to himself, and to his brethren in the Apostleship. This plainly appears to consist of two parts,

*1<sup>st</sup>*, The declaration of an important fact, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.' And,

*2<sup>dly</sup>*, An exhortation founded on this fact, 'We pray you in Christ stead be ye reconciled to God.'

Hence it is evident, that receiving this grace of God, imports neither more nor less than believing the fact, and complying with the exhortation, and, consequently, every thing short of this is receiving the grace of God in vain. Without any farther explanation, therefore, I shall now proceed to press the exhortation, by the most powerful arguments that I am able to present to your minds.

Let me beseech you, then, not to receive the grace of God in vain,—by the consideration of the misery and abject bondage of your condition, while you continue thus perverse and ungrateful. I will not enter into any speculative disquisition with regard to the pretensions of natural religion.—Whether those who never heard of the grace of God revealed in the gospel may yet be saved, by the efficacy of an unknown atonement, is a question with which we have little concern. I speak at present to those whose fate has nothing to do with the determination of this question. What say the Scriptures of truth with respect to them? ‘He that believeth on the Son hath life’—ponder what follows—‘he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.’ How awful are these words, ‘God is angry with the wicked every day.—’ ‘He hath bent his bow and made it ready;’ ‘he hath also prepared for him the instruments of death.’ And O how hopeless a warfare is that which you have undertaken! Is there any that ever hardened himself against God and prospered? Is there any strong hold

or lurking place, where the enemies of his government may be safe? Go try the whole creation round. Ascend to heaven, and he is there in the brightness of his majesty. Go down to the regions of darkness, and he is there in the severity of his justice. Take the wings of the morning, and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, even there his boundless dominion extends; even there his right hand shall hold thee a prisoner to his vengeance. Go ask protection from the highest angel, and he will tell you that one sin ruined myriads of his companions, and how then should he protect you from the penalty of multiplied transgressions: And if so exalted a being cannot help you, what can you hope from any other part of the creation? ‘ Surely in vain is salvation looked for from the hills and from the mountains.’ There is no other deliverer than this Jesus whom we preach. He is the alone surety that can pay all our debt; and even he can profit us nothing, till we receive him into our hearts by faith. Till that happy moment, the weight of all our sins lies on ourselves, and nothing but the brittle thread of life suspends us from

sinking for ever into the pit where there is no hope.

But the prospect of impending misery is not the only circumstance that characterizeth your unhappy condition. Present bondage—distracting and disgraceful bondage, is no less just a description of your state. The enemy of God and man rules in your hearts, and, by his imperious commands, all your inclinations and actions are swayed. It is possible, indeed, that this shameful slavery may be unknown to yourselves. You may flatter yourselves with a supposed liberty, and even boast of your freedom from those restraints to which the religious part of mankind are subject. But be assured this is no proof that your shackles are not real and binding. The tyrant, to whom you are subject, rules by deceit still more than by force, and all his artifices are used to blind the eyes of his prisoners. Nay, it may be asserted with confidence, that if you have not felt your chains—if you have not been conscious of a struggle in getting free of them, your redemption is not yet begun: For violence there must be, and violence that cannot but be felt, ere the usurper of your liberty be  
de-

dethroned. Such, then, is your unhappy and disgraceful condition, while ye receive the grace of God in vain. And let me remind you, that this is no painting of mine. I have only declared what the oracles of truth have pronounced; and to their sentence you must submit, or take the bold step of calling God a liar. In the

2d Place, let me beseech you not to receive the grace of God in vain, by the consideration of the happiness of those who give it a full and cordial reception. Every one of this happy number is justified from the guilt of all his iniquities; and say, whether you have well weighed the value even of this lowest privilege of believers. I am aware that thoughtless transgressors can have no conception of its importance; in their mad and desperate folly they even make a mock at sin, and deride the fears of the contrite and penitent. But go ask the pardoned sinner what he thinks of the benefit of forgiveness. Hear the grateful accents of one who spoke from deep and thorough experience. ‘ Blessed is  
‘ he whose transgression is forgiven, whose  
‘ sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom  
‘ the

‘ the Lord imputeth not iniquity :—For day  
 ‘ and night thine hand was heavy on me, so  
 ‘ that my moisture is turned into the drought  
 ‘ of summer.—O Lord my God, I cried un-  
 ‘ to thee, and thou hast healed me. Thou  
 ‘ hast brought up my soul from the grave ;  
 ‘ thou hast kept me alive, that I should not  
 ‘ go down into the pit ; thou hast put off my  
 ‘ sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.—  
 ‘ Therefore shall every one that is godly pray  
 ‘ unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be  
 ‘ found ; and I will give thanks unto thee, O  
 ‘ Lord my God, for ever and ever.’ But this  
 forgiveness, precious and invaluable as it is,  
 is only the introductory blessing bestowed on  
 those who give the grace of God a full and  
 cordial reception. Being justified by faith, they  
 have peace with God, and peace with their  
 own conscience. The cause of enmity being  
 removed, they are restored to friendship with  
 their Maker. God is not ashamed to be cal-  
 led their Father, nor reluctant to bestow on  
 them all the blessings and honours that per-  
 tain to his children. Hence the rapturous  
 gratitude of the Apostle John, too big for ex-  
 pression, and yet, by the very want of ex-  
 pression,

pression, more forcible than the most descriptive eloquence. ‘ Beloved, 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 meanest individual, nay, the most abandoned sinner that now hears me, may yet become an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ, a king and priest unto God, and a pillar in the heavenly temple, never to be removed. Let your desires soar to the greatest height, stretch your imaginations to the utmost,—yet the liberality of God will be still more unbounded. Much he hath promised to bestow on his people, and many similitudes he hath condescended to use, that their slow minds might be assisted in conceiving his bounty; but no where hath he said this is all your portion, or beyond this no more is to be expected. No, his bounty will be an everlasting fountain, and benefits for ever shall nourish eternal gratitude in the bosoms of the redeemed. ‘ For he that spared not his own Son, but gave him up to  
‘ the death for us all, how shall he not with  
‘ him also freely give us all things.’ Peruse  
the

the valedictory discourse of our Lord to his disciples, and learn from it what you may lawfully expect from a reconciled Father. All your prayers shall be heard. The Comforter, even the Holy Ghost, shall come into your hearts, and lead you into the knowledge of all truth. Ye shall be made fruitful in the works of righteousness. God himself shall make his abode with you. Ye shall be kept from the evil of the world while in it, and at last ye shall be where your exalted Redeemer is, to behold his glory, and to partake of his blifs.

And shall these considerations be still insufficient to determine your choice. O wonder not at the unbelieving Jews, who persecuted and slew the Lord of life. Let not your indignant sentiments rise at their injustice and cruelty. Their sin and folly were light compared with yours, who now reject his counsel, and despise his grace. Their scorn was excited by his mean appearance, and they hid their faces from him, because disguised in the form of a servant. But I will tell you a thing more horrible and astonishing: The Son of God, clothed in all the  
mild

mild glory of an exalted Saviour, and stretching forth his hands to bestow all the blessings purchased with his blood, is still despised and rejected. And thou, O impenitent sinner, art the man guilty of this contempt and ingratitude;—yet, blessed be God, though you may justly be charged with this almost incredible guilt, I am still warranted to beseech you, in the

3<sup>d</sup> and last place, Not to receive the grace of God in vain, by the consideration of the riches of his long suffering and forbearance. Long as his mercy has been insulted, it is still in your offer. I need not appeal to particular passages of Scripture to confirm this comfortable truth. It appears conspicuously through the whole tenor of revelation, every page of which contains the language of love and compassion to sinners. Review the history of Jesus, and after you have seen what he hath already done for our sakes, try if you can possibly question his good will. Did he condescend to be clothed with our mortal flesh, and will he disdain the entertainment of an affectionate and grateful heart? Did he bleed and die on the cross for our sins, and will he fail to perfect

perfect his work in our salvation?—It was a powerful argument which the Apostle Paul employed on a certain occasion with Agrippa, ‘Believest thou the Prophets?’ So say I to you, Do you believe the history of your Saviour, as recorded by four Evangelists? How do you read them? What was it that affected him with grief—was it not the hardness of men’s hearts? What was it that drew tears from his compassionate eyes—was it not the view of Jerufalem, that impenitent city, which knew not, or regarded not, the day of its merciful visitation? Nay, what was the errand on which he solemnly declared himself to be come into the world—was it not to ‘seek and to save them who were lost.’—And O! will ye counteract, by your obstinate folly, all these gracious intentions on his part. Will ye persist in rejecting his grace, until ye have extorted vengeance and indignation from him whose heart is love? How dreadful, in that case, must your doom be!—As ye love your souls, be warned in time against this desperate, this ruinous madness. The gracious call still resounds in your ears, ‘to-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.’

And

And we, as ambaffadors, are ftill charged to  
' befcech you, in Chriff's ftcad, be ye recon-  
' ciled to God.'

And now let me ask, What impreffion  
theſe plain and obvious remonſtrances have  
made on your minds? What may be their ef-  
fect, I cannot foretel. This I know, that could  
I hope to ſucceed better, I would with plea-  
ſure come down, and addreſs each of you,  
even on my bended knees, obteſting you by  
every ſolemn, every tender argument, to fly  
from the wrath to come. I eaſily foreſee the  
time, when the remembrance of this offered  
grace ſhall either fill you with joy unutter-  
able, or with fruitleſs and everlaſting anguiſh.  
For whatever thoughtleſs finners may ima-  
gine, no word of God ſhall ever return to  
him void, but ſhall accompliſh the purpoſe  
for which he ſends it. ' We are a ſweet fa-  
' your to God,' ſaith the Apoſtle Paul, ' in  
' you that believe, and in you that periſh ;  
' to the one we are the favour of life unto life,  
' and to the other of death unto death.' I am  
aware that pleadings of this kind are ſome-  
times treated with ridicule ; but the time is  
at hand when the ſcoffer ſhall be made ſober ;  
the

the view of death may do it—the day of judgment certainly will.

Now, then, is the accepted time. Now you may obtain an interest in this Saviour; and if you apply to him, as sure as God liveth, you shall find mercy. Thus far I can go; but one step farther I cannot proceed upon sure ground. I cannot promise you on any future time. If you reject the counsel of God now, I cannot assure even the youngest of you of another opportunity. Before to-morrow your doom may be fixed unalterably. May God enable you to profit by these instructions, and to his name be praise. Amen.

S E R-

## S E R M O N . XX.

I. JOHN, ii. 15.

*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

**F**ROM these words I propose, by divine assistance,

I. To describe that excessive or sinful love of the world, from which the Apostle here dissuades us.

II. To inquire wherein the malignity of this sin consists.

III. To lay before you a few symptoms of a worldly mind, and examine some of the apologies upon which men flatter themselves with being free of it. And,

IV. To enforce the exhortation, and give some directions how to get this undue affection towards earthly things mortified and subdued.

I. It will readily occur to you, that the exhortation is to be understood under certain restrictions. The place of his works, which God has appointed us to inhabit, cannot in itself be supposed an object deserving our aversion or dislike. This would be to impeach the goodness of our Creator, and to tax his handy work with imperfection. We may lawfully love the world, as it is the workmanship of God, and the mirror in which we behold the perfections of the invisible Creator. Creation is a large instructive volume, and the sense of every line is God. The proper use of all the creatures is to lead us upwards to him that made them, and to kindle in our souls the warmest gratitude to that unwearied benefactor, who has provided so liberally for our comfort and happiness. They are naturally the means of supporting our bodies while we are employed in those duties which we owe to God, and they also enable us to supply the wants of others, to lessen the miseries, and to heighten the lawful joys of our fellow creatures. On all these accounts we may and ought to value them as real blessings,

sings, which may be improved to the most important purposes.

But our love of the world becomes excessive and sinful, when we give it that room in our hearts which is only due to God; when it is desired for its own sake, as a sufficient portion independent of his favour and friendship. If the world will keep its due place, it may be valued and esteemed in that place; but if it usurp an higher station, and promise more than it is able to give, it must be rejected, as a deceiver, with abhorrence and contempt. When we seek after earthly things, merely that our inordinate desires may be gratified, that the pride of our hearts may be cherished, or our ambition attain its object; when we are not contented with our daily bread, and that portion of the good things of life which is sufficient to sustain us during our pilgrimage to a better country—then is our love of the world undue and excessive; and the more we desire it under such views, the worse, the more corrupted and estranged from the love of God, will our hearts become. This leads me,

II. To inquire wherein the malignity of this sin consists. This will be most effectually illustrated, by considering how deeply it taints the whole character and principles of action.

There are sins which only engage particular faculties of our nature in their service. Thus the love of pleasure is chiefly seated in the senses and the imagination. While these are strongly agitated by a particular enticement, conscience may indeed be totally overpowered for a season, and the person be carried along by an headstrong irresistible impulse: But the moral faculties have afterwards leisure to resume their influence; reason is again at liberty, to represent the pernicious consequences of transgression; and experience is always at hand, to convince the sinner how inconvenient and dangerous his forbidden pleasures are.

But no such checks are ready to occur to the man in whom the love of the world predominates. His sin is of deliberate choice, and engages the whole man in pursuit of its own ends. It is not an error about the means, it is not seeking a right end in a mistaken

taken way ; but it is purfuing a falfe and pernicious end, with care, anxiety, and felf-approbation. Hence it is called in Scripture IDOLATRY, not from any refemblance it has to the outward act of falling down before flocks or ftones, but becaufe it entirely difplaces our affections from their proper object, and leads them to the preference of an unjuft and delufive rival. Hence it is afferted, by the Apoftle James, that ‘ the friendship of ‘ the world is enmity to God.’ It is not merely a want of affection to our Maker, which more or lefs characterifes every fin ; but it is an abfolute oppofition and hatred to him, fo that, in the language of the text, ‘ if ‘ any man love the world, the love of the Fa- ‘ ther is not in him.’

From thefe confiderations it is evident, that this fin ftands as it were at the moft remote diftance from repentance. It overfpreads the mind fo entirely, as to leave in it no found principle to withftand the progrefs of complete alienation from God. It refembles thofe difeafes which do not attack one part of the body only, but which invade the whole conftitution. And it refembles fuch difeafes in

another respect also, that the person is seldom convinced of their reality, until the approach of a fatal termination renders it impossible for him longer to deceive himself.

This reasoning is confirmed by experience. No fault of the mind is in fact so rarely cured as a worldly disposition. Age and experience, which often bring a remedy with them for other follies, only confirm and increase the habits of an earthly mind. Even on the brink of the grave, when every other passion and desire has been extinguished, it has been known to occupy the departing spirit, with an anxiety little, if at all inferior, to that which animated its most active pursuits.

Such is the peculiar malignity, and dangerous nature of this sin. But as few will defend this criminal disposition directly, and as many who are enslaved by it are ready enough to join in generally condemning it, I proceed,

III. To lay before you a few symptoms of a worldly mind, and to examine some of the apologies upon which men flatter themselves with being free of it.

1st, Then, we love the world plainly to excess, when we use any unlawful means to obtain its advantages. This is a mark which cannot well be controverted; and yet how many will it involve in the charge of a worldly mind! Prove yourselves, then, by this characteristic. Would any prospect of gain tempt you to cheat or dissemble? Will your consciences allow you to go beyond or defraud your neighbour, providing you can do it in a way so secret as to defy human discovery? Does it seem a light matter to you, to take advantage of the simplicity or ignorance of others in the course of business? If so, your minds are indeed deeply corrupted; and it is not regard to God or his law, but to your own credit and safety, which restrains you from the most flagrant acts of injustice. Such persons may assure themselves, without farther examination, that the love of the Father is not in them, and that their hearts are wholly alienated from God: For, as the Apostle to the Romans argues, ‘ Know  
‘ ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves  
‘ servants to obey, his servants ye are to  
‘ whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death,

‘ or of obedience unto righteousness.’ And  
 ‘ no man can serve two masters, for either he  
 ‘ will hate the one and love the other ; or else  
 ‘ he will hold to the one and love the other ;  
 ‘ ye cannot serve God and Mammon.’

*2dly*, We love the world to excess, when, in the enjoyment of its good things, we are ready to say, with the rich man represented in our Lord’s parable, ‘ Soul take thine ease, ‘ thou hast goods laid up for many years, ‘ eat, drink, and be merry.’ Too much complacency, in what we possess, is no less an evidence of a worldly mind, than an excessive desire of more. Examine yourselves, then, with regard to the source whence you derive your pleasures—from heaven or from earth—from the abundance of corn, and wine, and oil—or from the light of God’s reconciled countenance ? Can you surrender yourselves to the relish of earthly enjoyments, without any acknowledgment of him who bestows them ? When riches increase, do you yield yourselves to the satisfactions arising from them, without considering the true state of your souls, whether they be growing in the favour of God, and in meetness for the heavenly

heavenly inheritance? If so, the world has deceived you, and God has little room in your affections.

*3dly,* The world predominates in our hearts, when it engrosses the principal train of our thoughts, when it is the last idea that possesseth us when we lie down, and the first when we arise; when it distracts us in our attendance on the duties of religion, interrupts our devotion in prayer, diverts our attention in hearing, and fetters our minds in meditation. I mean not to assert, that every degree of influence which it has in these respects, betrays its absolute ascendancy over the mind; for who then could free himself of this charge? —But when these worldly thoughts engross the mind by its own consent, when they make us grudge the time bestowed on religion, and eager to resume our earthly occupations, as soon as we have lulled our consciences with an unmeaning attendance on its ordinances—when, like the Jews of old, we say of the Sabbath, ‘ what a weariness! when ‘ will it be over, that we may sell corn.’— This is not only a preferring of the world to God, but in reality a solemn mockery of him,

not less provoking than open profanity itself.  
The

*4th* and *last* mark of a worldly mind which I shall mention, is unmercifulness to the poor. Those who have a large measure of temporal goods bestowed on them, ought certainly, in proportion to their abundance, to contribute to the necessities of their fellow creatures.

This is evidently the design of providence in permitting, or rather appointing, such extreme diversities of condition in the world. But too many of the opulent seem to think no such duty required of them. They flatter themselves that they do all that is incumbent on them in this respect, if, by the plenty of their tables, the splendour of their dwellings, the sumptuousness of their equipage, and other articles of their luxury, they find employment for the poor in providing for their consumption. This, indeed, is an eventual benefit to society, but is far from absolving them from the obligation they owe to it, much less does it acquit them of their duty to him who favoured them with such distinguished blessings: For what mark of gratitude to God is it, that we consume his boun-

ty upon our own pleasures, although, in so doing, we cannot avoid distributing a part of it to our fellow creatures?

Such persons, whatever they may think of themselves, how remote soever they may think a worldly character from being applicable to them, are in fact deeply chargeable with it. Perhaps they even do give a part of their superfluity for the relief of their brethren, and estimating that by its proportion to what others give, and not to the extent of their own means, think themselves uncommonly bountiful. But this is a gross deception, and will be found so in the day when every false pretence shall be detected before the judgment seat of Christ. Then shall they be found among those who loved the world, and in whose heart the love of the Father had no place.

These symptoms, if properly attended to, may be of considerable use towards discovering the true state of your characters in this respect. But as the heart is deceitful, and as we are extremely prone to flatter ourselves that we are free of this criminal disposition, it may be proper to endeavour, before closing  
this

this head of discourse, to detect some of those false apologies upon which men flatter themselves that they are not chargeable with it.

One concludes thus in his own favour, because he is poor, and necessity obliges him to work for his daily bread. How (says he) should I be suspected of a criminal love to the world, when I possess so little of it, and can, by all my labour, procure so few of its advantages? But this is a very deceitful ground of reasoning. He who lacks riches, may love them as well as he who possesses them: And therefore if you be discontented with your state—if you envy those above you—if, in your habits of thought, you consider wealth and happiness as inseparable—and if your diligence to prepare for another world be not superior to your industry in endeavouring to obtain a share of this—the *world* is still your *idol*, ‘and the love of the Father is not in you.’

Another flatters himself that he has no undue attachment to the world, because he does not project for himself any great or extensive acquisitions in it,—very small matters would satisfy him, and a moderate competence is all that

that he desires. But if your hearts are more set on these supposed moderate matters, than on the heavenly inheritance, you are still slaves to the world; and the more mean and inexcusable you are, that your object is so trifling and inconsiderable.

Besides, this is a very indecisive mode of reasoning. He that engages to seek only a *competence*, takes on himself a very easy engagement, because he binds himself only to a condition which is to be ascertained by his own opinion. The most covetous man on earth may make the same profession, provided you leave him to be the judge of what that competency amounts to. Look above you to the superior ranks of society, and see whether their extensive possessions extinguish their desires for more. Is not the reverse the fact? The richest are often in as great necessity as the most indigent—as often, at least, (and it is not seldom) as the imaginary wants, created by luxury, exceed their means of gratifying them. The decisive inquiry is not how much you desire, but for what ends you desire it.

A third conceives a favourable opinion of himself, because he uses no unlawful means

to rife in the world. Now this is in fo far good —and would to God we could all fay as much for ourfelves. But even this is not decifive in the point; for a man may love the world inordinately, who would neither fteal, nor rob, nor diflemble, in order to enrich himfelf. The fact is, thofe who have a juft and fteady fenfe of their intereft, find that thefe are by no means the beft ways of advancing it.

A good character is fo neceffary to carrying on worldly bufinefs of any kind with fuccefs, that a *wife man in his generation* will be fair and honeft in his dealings, from mere regard to his own advantage. But with all this prudential regard, coinciding with feeming virtue, his affections may be entirely placed on the world, to the excluſion of things fpiritual and everlaſting, which is the very character deſcribed and condemned in the text.

But, fays a fourth, it is impoſſible that I ſhould love the world to excefs, for it is the very vice which I principally hate and condemn in others.—But alas, fo do many thouſands

sands who are themselves abject slaves to the world, to the conviction of every person but themselves. It would indeed be utterly astonishing to observe, how keenly worldly men inveigh against the same dispositions in others, if this account of the appearance did not offer itself, viz. that the more they are rivals in this love, the more mutual jealousy and resentment must arise in their minds; or, to speak without any figure, the more covetous their neighbours are, the more they stand in the way to prevent their obtaining the emoluments they desire for themselves.

I will mention but one more pretence by which men deceive themselves in the respect we are considering, and that is the resolution of leaving their substance to charitable purposes when they die.—But ah! what an absurd delusion is this—to offer their worldly possessions to God, after they have abused them while they could, and can now retain them no longer. But upon this point I need not dwell longer; for although an abuse very common in former times, it is one with which the present age is not peculiarly chargeable.

able. ‘ Be not deceived then, God is not  
‘ mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that  
‘ shall he also reap. He that soweth to the  
‘ flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but  
‘ he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the  
‘ Spirit reap life everlasting.’ Amen.

S E R-

## S E R M O N XXI.

I. JOHN, ii. 15.

*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

**I** HAVE already described that excessive love of the world, from which the Apostle here dissuades us; and represented to you the greatness and malignity of this sin. I also laid before you some symptoms of an earthly mind, and endeavoured to detect the falsehood of those pretences, by which too many impose on their consciences, and flatter themselves that their love of the world is no greater than it ought to be. I now proceed to enforce the exhortation, and to offer a few directions for the help of those who are desirous of having their affections weaned from

the world, that they may rise upward to spiritual things. Consider then,

I. That this undue attachment to the world is absolutely inconsistent with the love of God. This is the Apostle's argument in the text. 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.—No man,' said our blessed Lord, 'can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.' Hence covetous men are stiled idolaters. They reject the true God, and substitute an idol in his room; they put the creature in place of the Creator; and make the gifts of his bounty, which should knit their hearts to him, the occasions of alienating their affections from him.

I am aware that worldly men are very unwilling to acknowledge this charge, and would be highly offended should any accuse them directly of hating the God that made them. There is something so monstrous and shocking in the idea of hatred and enmity against God, that it is scarcely to be supposed  
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any thinking man can reconcile himself to it. But be assured this charge, however odious it may appear, will be made good against every worldly man at last; and therefore, as you would avoid the shame of standing before the judgment seat in such a character, labour to get your affections divorced from earthly things, and henceforth let God be supreme in your hearts. Consider,

II. That an immoderate love of the world is not less foolish than sinful. ‘All that is in the world,’ saith the Apostle, in the verse following the text, ‘the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof.’—Many of its enjoyments are imaginary as well as transient. The pleasure and happiness we expect from them have no foundation in the nature of things, but depend entirely on a diseased corrupt fancy. If we look back to the history of mankind in all ages, the discontented and miserable will be as often found among the prosperous and affluent, as among the poor and depressed conditions

of life. Those situations which appear so desirable as objects of expectation, are often in experience found marvellously barren of real happiness. Whence does this arise? Is it not from the wise appointment of God, that nothing here below should satisfy the desires of an immortal creature? Vanity is, for this reason, engraved in deep and legible characters on all things below the sun; and he that pursues the good things of this world as his only portion, will inevitably find that the most fortunate experience of life will never amount to a solid happiness, in which the heart of man can find rest and satisfaction. ‘He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase.’ Therefore said our Lord to the multitude, ‘take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.’

Nature is easily satisfied, but when men create for themselves imaginary wants, they only provide an inexhaustible stock of solicitude and disappointment. The craving appetite will still be crying give, give, and in  
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the fulness of their sufficiency they will be in want. What has the world ever done for its most devoted servants, that should make you desire it so greedily? Solomon went as far as any man ever did, both in the acquisition and enjoyment of earthly things, and in the conclusion passed this sentence on the review of all his experience, ‘Vanity of vanities, faith  
‘the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is va-  
‘nity and vexation of spirit.’—And have you discovered an art of extracting comfort from the creatures, beyond what the wisest of men was able to do?—What do you seriously expect from the world? Will it prevent or remove sickness?—Will it ward off the stroke of death; or will it even administer any consolation to you at that trying season? Should one come to you on your death-bed, when your spirits are languishing, your hearts failing, and your bodies possessed with racking pain, and begin to console you by representing your vast acquisitions of wealth, would his words be reviving? Will it afford you any joy to contemplate those possessions from which you are presently to be divorced for ever? You cannot think so. You must be

fenfible, that all things below the fun will prove miserable comforters in dying moments, and that the favour of God will then appear infinitely more defirable than ten thousand worlds. What infatuation, then, is it, to fet your hearts fupremely on that which you know will appear moft contemptible at laft. Confider,

III. That as the love of the world to excefs is finful and foolifh, fo it is alfo pernicious and fatal. ‘ They that will be rich,’ faith the Apoftle to Timothy, ‘ fall into temptation, and a fnare, and into many foolifh and hurtful lufts, which drown men in deftruction and perdition ; for the love of money is the root of all evil.’

It were an endless task to enumerate all the difmal effects of this fordid difpofition. ‘ From whence come wars and fightings,’ faith the Apoftle James, ‘ come they not hence, even of your lufts which war in your members. Ye luft and have not ; ye kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain.’ It is this which engenders ftrife and contention, and almoft every evil work. It deftroys the tranquillity  
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of the person possessed by it; it incites him to trespass on the rights and enjoyments of others, and on both these accounts is often punished with remarkable judgments even in the present life. How awful is that curse pronounced by the Prophet Habakkuk, ‘ Wo  
 ‘ to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to  
 ‘ his house, that he may set his nest on high,  
 ‘ that he may be delivered from the power  
 ‘ of evil. Thou hast consulted shame to thy-  
 ‘ self, and hast sinned against thy soul; for  
 ‘ the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the  
 ‘ beam out of the timber shall answer it.’—

How dismal was the fate of Ananias and Sapphira!—How horrible the end of Judas Iscariot! In both these instances, the saying of the Wise Man, Proverbs, i. 19. was remarkably verified, ‘ the greediness of gain taketh  
 ‘ away the life of the owners thereof.’ But although they should escape in this world, yet they shall not escape the damnation of hell. Then shall they find that riches will not profit them in the day of God’s wrath.

There is a striking passage to this purpose, James v. 1. ‘ Go to now, ye rich men, weep  
 ‘ and howl, for your miseries that shall come

‘ upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and  
‘ your garments are moth eaten; your gold  
‘ and silver is cankered, and the rust of them  
‘ shall be a witness against you, and shall eat  
‘ your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped  
‘ treasure together for the last day.’ Such is the  
present wretchedness, and the miserable por-  
tion at last of an earthly mind. Whereas,

IV. An heart disengaged from this exces-  
sive love of the world, would not only pre-  
vent all this misery, but likewise give us the  
true relish of life, and make death itself easy  
and comfortable. Take away earthly things  
from a worldly man, and you take away his  
all; but the same things withdrawn from an  
heavenly minded Christian, do not annihilate  
his fund of happiness. When the streams  
of created comforts fail, he resorts to the  
fountain; when the creatures forsake him, he  
can rejoice in the Creator, and joy in the  
God of his salvation. The good things he  
possesseth have a peculiar relish, which earth-  
ly minds are incapable of feeling. He sees  
the bounty of God in every gift, and the  
faithfulness of his covenant in every comfort  
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he enjoys. He therefore eats his bread with joy, and drinks his wine with a merry heart; and while he thus sits chearfully at the feast which providence has set before him, he fears not the intrusion of any unwelcome messenger to interrupt his peace. He is not afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed trusting in the Lord. Prepared for all the vicissitudes of life, adversity can take nothing from him, which, in the discipline of his own mind, he has not resigned already. Nay, death itself; that presentiment so dreadful to the worldly mind, is to him, in a great measure, divested of its terrors: For he knows, ‘ that if this earthly ‘ house of his tabernacle were dissolved, he ‘ has a building of God, an house not made ‘ with hands, eternal in the heavens.’

Having thus endeavoured to enforce the exhortation in the text, it only remains that I offer a few directions for the help of those who are desirous to have their affections weaned from the world, that they may rise upwards to spiritual things.

1<sup>st</sup>, Let us beware of receiving too flattering a picture of the world into our minds, or  
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of expecting more from it than it is able to bestow. Let us correct our florid and gaudy expectations, and make a sober estimate of its real amount. For this purpose go sometimes to the house of mourning, rather than to the house of feasting. Behold there the untimely hand of death, taking away the desire of the eyes with a stroke, blasting the most virtuous joys of humanity, tearing asunder the dearest connections, demolishing the painted tapestry, and hanging up in its place the solemn fable and escutcheon.

Such objects, viewed with seriousness and attention, are far more profitable than the gilded scenes of mirth and gaiety; they check that wantonness which is the growth of ease and prosperity, and lead us to reflect that this world is not our home, but a foreign land, in which our vexations and disappointments are designed to turn our views towards that higher and better state, which we are destined to inherit.

*2dly*, Be very suspicious of a prosperous state, and fear the world more when it smiles than when it frowns. It is difficult to possess  
much

much of it, without loving it to excess. The great enemy of our souls is well aware of this, and therefore would give all his servants liberal portions in this world, were it in his power. This was his last effort in the train of temptations which he addressed to our Lord in the wilderness, and when this failed he immediately departed from him.

There is not a more salutary maxim in religious concerns, than always to suspect danger where we feel much delight. If our situation be such as entirely pleases our natural desires, it is high time to look well to the soul, and to set a strict guard on our heart, lest, by these pleasing enjoyments, they should be betrayed and alienated from God, who alone has a right to them.

*3dly*, Make a wise improvement of the afflictions with which you may at any time be visited. Beware of repining under them, or thinking them greater evils than they really are; but rather believe that they are graciously sent for the benefit of your souls, to mortify your inordinate affections to the present world. ‘Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.’—Nay, the seasonable visitation  
of

of temporal calamities, is included in the tenor of that everlasting covenant, which is well ordered in all things and sure. Does the world then frown on you; are you afflicted with poverty, sickness, pain, and reproach? Do relations grieve you? Do friends prove unfaithful; or are you bereaved of them by death? Neglect not so fair an opportunity of instruction, when you have experience itself to disgrace the pretensions of the world, and your very flesh is made to feel that it is both vain and vexatious. Remember that God has sent these rough messengers to bring you home to himself. Gratefully, then, comply with his call, and chuse him for your portion, leaving the world to those who have no better sources of satisfaction.

*4thly*, Look forward to eternity, and take a serious view of that world, wherein you must dwell for ever, after you have spent a few more days and nights in this. Remember that heaven or hell must be your everlasting abode; and must it not be of the last importance to know, which of these different states shall be your lot? Can that man spend his time and strength in the pursuit of trifles,  
who

who believes and who considers that he is hastening to appear before God in judgment, when his final state shall be allotted according to his present behaviour? Must not the foresight of this awful trial disengage his mind from the world, and cure his anxiety about earthly things, by producing in him an anxiety about matters of infinitely greater consequence. 'Let your moderation be known unto all men (saith the Apostle) THE LORD IS AT HAND.' A more powerful argument could not be used. An habitual impression of this awful truth, that the Lord is at hand, that he standeth before the door, would effectually cure our feverish desires after earthly things, and awaken us to a deep concern about the interests of our precious and immortal souls.

Finally, let us be wise in time, and give the supreme affections of our hearts to God, who alone is worthy of them; imploring, for this purpose, the aid of his Holy Spirit, to enable us to comply with his own gracious exhortation, Isaiah, lv. 2. 'Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?'

‘ not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat  
‘ ye that which is good, and let your soul  
‘ delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear,  
‘ and come unto me, hear and your souls  
‘ shall live, and I will make with you an  
‘ everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies  
‘ of David.’ Amen.

F I N I S.





