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SERMONS

ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS;

BY

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OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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NOTE, BY THE EDITORS.

THE editors of this little volume feel as if they could do nothing more likely to promote the cause of Christianity, or true vital piety, than to lay before the public the following Discourses. It seemed a matter of serious regret, that so rich a treasure of heavenly things, in which every true disciple of Jesus may find instruction worthy his attention, should not be appropriated to general use. These Discourses cannot have a higher recommendation than their own intrinsic merits. To praise them simply, would not be doing them justice ; for, in general, whether the style or subject matter be taken into consideration, every candid critic will allow, that they must have been the efforts of a Christian and a scholar, of no common attainments. In the arrangement of the subject, they are clear and simple : in the exposition of the text, luminous beyond example. Passing by points of doctrine, they aim at nothing but to inculcate pure and vital religion ; and this is

enforced with such a peculiar energy and beauty, as cannot fail to affect the heart, interest the feelings, and open the understanding of the reader.

The editors have, further, to observe, that the publication of Sermons is, generally, too much confined to the particular denomination to which the writer belongs. But so far as respects the following Discourses, this never ought to be the case. There is nothing discoverable in them of party spirit or sectarian prejudice; and it is confidently believed, that the pious and good of every denomination, who shall read the following Sermons with candour and attention, must feel their hearts glow in unison with that of the writer.

It may be proper to state to the public, that these Sermons were not written with a view for publication, nor have they ever been revised for that purpose.

New-York, September, 1815.

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BROTHERLY LOVE

CONSIDERED AS THE

SIGN AND PROOF

OF THE

CHRISTIAN'S GROWTH IN DIVINE GRACE:

IN THREE SERMONS.

SERMON I.

1 John iii. 14.

*We know that we have passed from death unto life,
because we love the brethren.*

IT was the blessed privilege of the beloved apostle and his fellow-believers, to have this happy testimony in their own minds, that they were *passed from death unto life*. They *knew* this to be the case, by a conviction wrought within themselves: they had an indisputable *sign* and *proof* of it, which they could not question: they were persuaded hereby, that their lot would be eternally happy; that they were restored to the favour of God; that they were *one with God, and God with*

them; of consequence, that death, misery, and condemnation, were no longer to be dreaded by them, because they were *passed* far away from such things, and born into another kingdom. Thus their souls were kept in peace through all the troubles and disquietudes of this lower world; and having hope in God, and being at rest in him, they *rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

Let it not however be supposed, that these blessed privileges were intended to be confined to St. John and the first disciples of Christianity. They belong alike to all those who profess the same holy religion, and obey its heavenly doctrines. They belong therefore to us, to you and to me, and to every true believer in Jesus Christ; and it is a grace granted to every one of us, if we are wise enough to discover it, to be enabled to say, "We know that we have passed from death unto life."

That this is the case, will appear plain from the consideration of these two particulars, to which I could earnestly wish to engage your present most serious attention.

First. The nature of the *passage* here spoken of by the apostle, *from death unto life.*

Secondly. The sign or proof of our having made this passage, *viz. because we love the brethren.*

First, then, let us consider the nature of the passage spoken of by the apostle, *from death unto life.*

It is a matter little thought of by the generality of Christians, that there is such a *passage from death unto life*; and still less is it considered, that this *passage* is to

be made by us in this world ; otherwise it never can be made ; and least of all is it in general apprehended, how the thoughtless and impenitent never discover this *passage*, but abide in the regions of *death*, whilst the penitent and sincere believer both discovers the *passage*, and walks therein, until he arrives at the regions of *eternal life* and peace.

The generality of Christians therefore think of no other death but the death of the body, and of no other passage to life but the passage through the grave of the body ; and thus, alas ! too many, it is to be feared, neglect to look for that passage till it is too late to find it, and never *pass from death unto life*, because, being blinded by the delusions of sin, they did not believe such a thing possible or attainable here below.

But, beloved, that there is a passage *from death unto life*, is plain from the concurrent testimony of the Word of God throughout ; and that this passage is such, as that we may both discover it, and may make it, during our abode in this world, is equally plain from the declaration of the apostle in my text, speaking of himself and of other believers, “ We know that we have passed from death unto life.”

From this declaration it is manifest, not only that there is a passage *from death unto life*, but that men like ourselves also had made the passage, and *knew* that they had made it, even during their abode in this world.

To the same purpose, but in different words, the apostle Paul bears this testimony, “ Giving thanks to the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the in-

heritance of the saints in light ; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.”*

Here St. Paul speaks, both in his own name, and in that of his fellow Christians, of a “deliverance from the power of darkness, and a translation into the kingdom of Jesus Christ,” which they had experienced, even whilst they were living in the body here below ; which is the same thing as what St. John calls the “passing from death unto life.”

The first Christians, therefore, it is most manifest, not only *knew*, and were assured, that there was a passage *from death unto life*, even to be found in this world ; but they also discovered this passage, and made it during their abode here below, and were moreover assured, to their unspeakable comfort, and by the most incontrovertible signs and proofs, that they had made this passage.

And yet these were men like unto ourselves : they were subject to the same infirmities ; they had the same corruptions to struggle with ; were exposed to like temptations with ourselves : neither had they any other or higher helps than we Christians have at this day. The Almighty did not favour them more than he doth us : his grace was not stronger or more powerful in their bosoms, than we might find it to be in ours : heaven was not nearer or more open to them, than it is to us ; and yet we find they were enabled to attain unto this most

* Coloss. i. 12, 13.

happy of all human conditions, to *know* that they were *passed from death unto life*.

What I would therefore here contend for, and wish to press upon your present most earnest consideration, is this, that what those first Christians once attained to, is still attainable by us, if we will but be as faithful to our God and his word, and as true to our own best interests, as they were. We may therefore *pass from death unto life*, even during our abode in this world, as certainly and fully, as ever St. John, St. Paul, or any other of our Lord's first disciples did. We may have the same signs and infallible proofs, which they had, that we are so *passed*. We may thus attain, if we be so disposed, unto the same grounds of heavenly hope, assurance, and comfort, in our acceptance with God.

For the religion of the blessed Jesus, let it be well noted, is the same religion at this day, that it was seventeen or eighteen hundred years ago. The minds of men, as to their belief in it, and their reception of it, may indeed be changed, but itself cannot change. Its doctrines are still the same, and will remain so to eternity. Its power upon the human soul, if it be rightly received, is also still the same. It is capable, therefore, of effecting *now*, what it effected in *old time*. It can still open heaven to the true believer; it can still transform man from earthly to heavenly; it can still *deliver from the power of darkness, and translate us into the kingdom* of its divine Author: it can, in short, still enable us to say, if we are not wanting to ourselves, what was said to

their unspeakable bliss, by them of old time, “ We know that we have passed from death unto life.”

I am well aware, however, that this will hardly be believed by the carnal and the careless. All such are unwilling to allow, that the powers of heaven are so near them, or that as much fruit of those powers will be expected from them, as from the saints of old. Thus they set limits to the operations of God, which God himself hath not set, and which he hath declared he never will set. They say, for instance, “ Apostles might look for extraordinary advancements in divine grace ; they might overcome the world and the flesh ; they might become the sons of God ; they might, by the purity of their lives and the power of their faith, *pass from death unto life* ; but this is not to be expected in *our days* : it was never intended we should experience such influences of divine grace, or bring forth such fruits thereof in our hearts and lives.”

Thus do the carnal and the careless labour to reason themselves out of the real excellency of their religion, and all its benefits, by supposing those benefits to be confined to those few who first received the gospel of Christ. But, beloved, permit me, by way of conclusion to this part of my present subject, to caution you most earnestly against suffering your minds to be betrayed into such unworthy, false, and dangerous sentiments of your religion and its divine Author. For this purpose, ponder well with yourselves the genuine design of the Gospel of Christ, and the *unchangeableness* thereof. Its intention is, and needs must be the same now, that it

was at its *first* preaching and establishment. The powers and privileges which it presents to the true believer, are also the same. As, therefore, it formerly operated on the minds of apostles, confessors, martyrs, and thousands of other holy disciples, to convert them to Jesus Christ, to turn them from sin and vanity, to transform them from earthly to heavenly, to purify, change, redeem, and renew their sinful natures, and thus to make them *pass from death unto life*; even so also it would operate at this day, if men's minds were but in a like state to admit and comply with its operation.

Believe then this to be the real truth, and that of consequence you are now called, and every believer in the Gospel is called, to experience the same blessed effects from it, that the apostles themselves experienced. I do not say that you are to look for the gift of working miracles, as they did; nor to go about the world to convert it by your preaching, like St. Peter or St. Paul: but this you are certainly to look for, viz. to believe in and to love Jesus Christ, the incarnate God and Saviour, as they believed in and loved him; and in this belief and love to your brethren, as St. Peter and St. Paul loved their brethren; and thus to be meek, humble, patient, contented, and charitable, as you read the Lord's first disciples were; and to overcome the devil, the world, and the flesh, as they did; and hereby to *pass from death unto life*. For, search and consult your own minds, and see whether you can discover there any reason why you should be less holy than St. John, or any other of the Lord's first disciples were. Is it not in your power t

love God, and your neighbour, as they did? Cannot you repent and believe in Jesus Christ, as well as they? Cannot you, therefore, grow alike in the divine grace, and attain unto a like measure of true Christian virtues? Make but the experiment, and make it with sincerity, and believe me, or rather believe God, you will soon be fully convinced, that the measure of holiness to which the saints of old were called, and attained, is the very same to which you also are called, and *may* attain.

Away then with all vain reasonings. Repent, and believe the Gospel. Turn unto Jesus Christ, the manifested JEHOVAH, and keep his commandments; and you will then soon experience, that heaven is still open. God is still near and powerful, and his grace still operative as in old time; whereby you will, sooner or later, be enabled, to your unspeakable bliss, to say with the apostle, "We know that we have passed from death unto life."

SERMON II.

1 John iii. 14.

*We know that we have passed from death unto life;
because we love the brethren.*

IN the foregoing discourse we endeavoured to point out the nature of the passage *from death unto life* here spoken of, as being a passage to be performed during our abode in this world, and to which all Christians are alike called universally.

We shall now proceed further to shew the nature of this *passage*, and then consider the *sign* or *proof* here mentioned by the apostle, of our having made this passage, viz. *because we love the brethren*.

It must be very plain to every considerate person, that by *passing from death unto life*, is not meant any *bodily* passage, or any change of place or situation with respect to the *body*.

For if the *body* was to move ever so far in any direction, upwards or downwards, it would not be possible for us to depart further from *death*, or to approach nearer *unto life* than we were before.

The case is, the terms *life* and *death*, as used in holy scripture, are applied to denote, not any particular state of the *body*, but particular states of the *soul or spirit*, with respect to God and the things of his eternal kingdom.

According to this application of the terms *life* and *death*, to *pass from death unto life*, denotes a change wrought in the internal state of the *soul or spirit*, so that whereas it before lived in a state of spiritual *death*, it now begins to live in a state of spiritual *life*.

As for example. It is written in holy scripture, “man doth not *live* by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord, doth man live.”* And in another place “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”† By which words we are plainly taught this truth, that *not to partake of the word of the Lord*, or *not to keep his commandments*, is a state of spiritual *death*; but, on the contrary, that *to partake of the word of the Lord*, or *to keep his commandments*, is a state of spiritual *life*. Whensoever then the soul or spirit of man, which heretofore had no knowledge and love of the Lord and of his *Word*, begins now to perceive an inward sense of love and regard thereto, and takes delight in the ways of God, and the *keeping of his commandments*, such a soul or spirit is said to *pass from death unto life*.

So again. The apostle speaks of being “dead in trespasses and sins.”‡ To live therefore in *trespasses and sins* against God is a state of spiritual *death*; of conse-

* Deut. viii. 3. Mat. iv. 4. Luke iv. 4.

† Mat. xix. 17.

‡ Ephes. ii. 1.

quence to cease from *trespasses* and *sins*, and to begin to lead a *new* life, is a state of *spiritual life*; and this change wrought in the soul from a state of *trespasses and sins* to a contrary state of purity and holiness, is therefore a *passing from death unto life*.

So again. "She that liveth in pleasure (saith the apostle) is dead while she liveth;"* that is, the soul or spirit, which indulgeth in the mere pleasures of the carnal, worldly, and sensual life, and knoweth no better and higher enjoyments than these, is in a state of *death*; to come out of this state then, so as to begin to be made sensible of other and superior pleasures to those of flesh and blood, viz. the eternal pleasures of righteousness, which flow from the knowledge and love of God, this is to begin truly *to live*; and the change wrought hereby in the state of the soul or spirit, is a real *passage from death unto life*.

To mention one other instance, which may serve to set this matter in a still clearer light. When the repenting prodigal returns unto his father, we are informed of the glad and welcome reception which his father gives him, how he ordered the *fatted calf* to be killed, saying, *let us eat and be merry*; for which he gives this very extraordinary reason, "This my son was dead, and is alive again."† Here every enlightened person may plainly see what is meant in holy scripture by being *dead* and being *alive*, or by *death* and *life*. When the prodigal had no regard to his father, or his father's house, and felt

* 1 Tim. 5. 6.

† Luke x. v. 24. 32.

no desire of returning thereto, “ but was wasting his substance in riotous living,” he is then said to be *dead*, though he was living at the same time in all the gratifications and enjoyments of riot and luxury, of this world and the flesh : but as soon as ever he is weary of these wretched satisfactions, and begins to feel a warmth of penitent affection kindled towards his father, with a desire to return to him and to his house, he is then said to be *alive*, though at the same time he ceased to live to his former bodily and carnal enjoyments.

Here then, if we be so disposed, we may all see clearly what is meant in holy scripture by *death* and *life*, and by passing from one to the other. *Death* is to live without God and his Word, or, what is the same thing, to have no love towards God, and no delight in him and in his commandments. *Life* on the contrary is to live with God, and to partake of his Word, that is, to have love towards God, and to find delight to our souls in the way of his commandments. *To pass from death unto life* then, in this particular instance, is to come out of a state of *no* love towards God, and *no* delight in his Word, into a state wherein we both love and delight in God, and in the purities of his Word and commandment.

Again. *Death* is a state of wilful sin and impenitence ; *life* therefore is a state of repentance of ceasing from sin. *Death* again is a state of false pleasures and satisfactions, such as are those of this world and the flesh, when separated from the pleasures of righteousness. *Life* therefore on the other hand is a state of *real* pleasures and satisfactions, such as are those arising from

the love of God. In these instances, therefore, to *pass from death unto life*, is to pass through repentance, from the vain and false gratifications of the corrupt part of our nature, which is carnal and worldly minded, to be made sensible within ourselves of the pure and eternal delights flowing from the love of God, and the communications of his peace to our minds and consciences.

And would we know, beloved, the real, deep, and scriptural ground of all this, it is as follows. There is but one true and real *life*, and one true and real fountain of *life*, and that is God, and his Word and kingdom. Whatever then is not connected with God, his Word, and kingdom, this, in the language of holy scripture, is said to be *dead*, or in a state of *death*. Devils, therefore, or infernal spirits, though living in a state of most exquisite feeling and sensibility, are still said to be *dead*, and to dwell in the regions of *death*; the reason is, because by love they have no conjunction with God, his Word, and kingdom, from whence alone life cometh. In like manner impenitent and ungodly men are said to be *dead*, and to dwell in the regions of *the shadow of death*, though possibly they may be living at the same time in the highest state of worldly gratification and fleshly sensibilities, and the reason is the same, viz. because by the impenitence and impurity of their lives, they separate themselves from conjunction with God and his life. We talk indeed of other *life* besides the life which is of God, and of other *death* besides that which consists in separation of the love from God. Thus we talk of the *life* of vegetables, and of the *life* of animals, which are incapable of

loving God, and of being thus conjoined with him. We say also of men that they are *living*, or *alive*, when we see them alive and active in the love and pursuit of the things of this world, animated with the prospects of ambition, gain, glory, or sensuality. We say also of the same men, that they are *dead*, when we see them cease to live in the body, notwithstanding their beginning to live instantly in another world, in a state of feeling and perception far superior to what they experienced here below. It is however well to be attended to, that though in common language we apply the terms of *life* and *death*, in these subordinate and lower senses, yet, as used in holy scripture, they have a higher and infinitely more important signification. What man therefore frequently calls *life*, God calls *death*, and what man calls *death*, God, on the contrary, calls *life*. The reason is, God calls nothing *life*, and allows nothing to be *alive*, but what is connected with himself, the only *life*, by a living principle of love and understanding; and therefore in his sight, and according to his language, the mere natural, animal, and unregenerate life of man, let its feelings, perceptions, and delights seem ever so exquisite, it is but *death*, or the shadow and image of true *life*, as having no conjunction by love and wisdom with the eternal and only source of the true *life*, according as it is written, "To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life."*

* Rom. viii. 6.

The continual call of God therefore unto man, in his Word, is to come and enter by repentance, by faith and obedience, or, in other words, with his life's love, and understanding, and operation, into conjunction with himself, the *fountain of life*, that so he may live for ever; this conjunction alone being true *life*, and worthy of the name. In his natural state, we know, man has no such conjunction, for in his natural state, by reason of hereditary and actual evil, he has no true love towards God, but loves himself and the world better than God, and his neighbour. In his natural state therefore he is *dead*, or in a state of *death*, from which state he cannot possibly be delivered but by returning to God, and entering into conjunction with him, through His Word, or commandment.

Nevertheless, though man may be by nature in a state of *death*, yet it is his own fault if he continues therein, and absolutely *dies* for ever. For God giveth every one of us power to come out of this *death*, and enter into the regions of *life*, in as much as he giveth every one of us power to know and to love Him, and to know, and love and practise his Word, and thus to re-enter into conjunction with him, which is *eternal life*.

For let us search now, and examine ourselves, whether we have not all of us this power from God in our inner man; and we shall assuredly find that we have it. For cannot we think of God, if we be so disposed, as often as we please? Cannot we think of sin, that is opposite to God, and therefore separates us from God? Cannot we think of holiness, that is from God, and agree-

able to God, and therefore unites us with God? Cannot we therefore say thus to ourselves, "I will hate and renounce sin, because it separates me from God; and I will love and practise holiness, because it joins me with God?" And cannot we thus assure ourselves, that as we depart from sin, and enter into conjunction with God, we shall *pass from death unto life*? Only let us be at the pains to examine ourselves, and make the experiment, and we shall certainly find that we are in possession of the blessed power and privilege here described.

I should now proceed to consider the sign and proof given in the words of my text, of our having *passed from death unto life*, viz. *because we love the brethren*: but the present time will only permit me to conclude what has been already said, with this brief but affectionate expostulation.

Are we, beloved, of the happy number of those who have made the passage *from death unto life*, or are we still walking in the *valley of the shadow of death*? Let us examine ourselves well in this important matter. Are we returned unto God? Do we begin to find a love towards God, and a real delight of heart in him and his ways? Are we for this purpose turned, or in the desire to turn, from all known evils, because they are opposite to God? Do we cease to delight in the sin and vanity of this world and the flesh; and do we consider well, that they who live in the fond indulgence of mere carnal and earthly pleasures, are *dead whilst they live*? Is it thus become the chief affection, satisfaction, and endeavour of our lives, to enter

into conjunction with God, his Word, and kingdom, by well-doing, that so we may *live* for ever? Some such few questions as these, seriously proposed, and sincerely answered, will soon bring us acquainted with the state of our souls, how far we are *passed from death unto life*.

And blessed shall he be who upon such an examination shall find that he is not still abiding in the regions of death and misery. Blessed shall he be whose conscience bears him testimony that he hath begun to love his God and Redeemer, and to delight in the paths of life and righteousness. He is on the highway which leadeth to the New Jerusalem. He hath departed from the city of Destruction, and is about to enter into the City of the Lord of Hosts. Mount Zion is directly before his face, and though his body be here upon earth amongst men, yet his spirit is travelling in the midst of angels to take possession of the promised inheritance, the land of everlasting life, which is the blessed portion of all those that fear God and keep his commandments. AMEN

SERMON III.

1 John iii. 14.

*We know that we have passed from death unto life,
because we love the brethren.*

HAVING already endeavoured to shew, in the two foregoing discourses, what is here implied, and to be understood by *passing from death unto life*, I shall now proceed, as was proposed, to consider, lastly, the *sign or proof* here mentioned, of our having made this passage, viz. *because we love the brethren*.

This *sign or proof*, however, cannot possibly be understood, until it be first known who are here meant by those whom the apostle calls *the brethren*. May I therefore bespeak your serious attention to this previous consideration, from which it will plainly appear what is implied and understood by *loving the brethren*.

Now the apostles and first Christians, we know, called all those *the brethren*, or *the brotherhood*, who were united together in one common faith and love, that is, in faith and love towards their common God and Saviour Jesus

Christ, operating in newness of life, according to the commandments.

Wherever they saw this operative faith and love, there they acknowledged *a brother*; and they respected, revered, honoured, loved, and cherished him, as one begotten again of the same heavenly Parent with themselves, and making one of that great and holy family, body, or kingdom, whose head is the great Redeemer, the manifested God, the Lord Jesus Christ; herein following the spirit and example of their divine Master, who had taught them, "My mother and my brethren are they who hear the Word of God, and do it."*

It was not, therefore, any outward condition or circumstances, with regard to this world, which determined this *brotherhood*. Rank and riches were no qualifications to be admitted into the holy *fraternity*; neither did poverty and meanness of birth exclude any. The single question respecting any one, was this, Doth he believe in Jesus Christ, the God who hath lately appeared amongst us to take away our sins? and doth he manifest his faith by love, or by a life according to the commandments of this God? If so, he is *a brother*, be he rich or poor, be his birth honourable or dishonourable in the eyes of men.

And as the conditions of men, with regard to their outward worldly circumstances, was of no account in forming this *brotherhood* amongst the first Christians, so

* Luke viii. 21. See also Matt. xiii. 45, 47, 48, 49, 50; and Mark ii. 31, 32, 33, 34, 35.

neither was the love, which influenced the members of this *brotherhood*, grounded in, or determined by, any mere natural affections, such as arise from natural relationships, friendships, and partial worldly attachments one towards another.

There is a principle, we know, which often is called love, and passes for Christian love and charity amongst men, which has no higher source, no deeper ground, than that of mere animal instinct, or natural similitude, or worldly associations, for the sake of worldly interests, comfort, or convenience.

This, however, was not the principle which operated to produce *brotherly love* amongst the apostles and first Christians. These holy persons were wrought upon by higher and more heavenly motives herein, than any which arise from mere worldly connexions or relationships of flesh and blood. In this respect was verified what is written of them, that they were "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* Their attachment, therefore, towards each other, was a divine and holy attachment. It had its ground and source in the great Father of all spirits. It was an holy principle of heaven-born charity, which, being eternal and stable as its origin, was not subject to those variations, changes, and caprices, which ever accompany mere human and natural affections, let them be ever so near and tender.

* John i. 13.

We are not, however, to suppose, that this love and attachment of the first Christians towards each other, was merely spiritual, unattended with work and operation, which is the fruit of charity ; for it was a principal lesson of their love, “ not to love in word and in tongue only, but in deed and in truth.”* They revered each other, therefore, as children of heaven and immortality : but this was not all : from this reverence they were led to exercise every outward act of benevolence one towards another ; their lives were continually employed in doing good ; and it was their supreme joy and delight to be serviceable in the smallest respect to any, who bore the stamp and image of the God whom they worshipped.

From this short view, then, of what the apostles and first Christians understood by *the brethren*, or *brotherhood*, and of the nature and operation of their love towards the *brethren*, it will now plainly appear to every considerate person, what is meant and implied by this sign or proof of passing from death unto life ; viz. *because we love the brethren*.

To *love the brethren*, is to love *that* in others, which is of God, that is, the divine image and likeness ; or, in other words, all those living and heavenly graces, virtues, and excellencies, which proceed from a sound and pure faith and love towards the Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ. But this is not all. To *love the brethren* further implies, that our love becomes operative in good

* 1 John iii. 18.

works, or in producing its proper outward fruits: it implies, therefore, an external life of active benevolence, corresponding with that internal and heavenly principle from which it proceeds. He who *loves the brethren*, therefore, not only reveres the divine image and likeness in his fellow-creatures, but labours also continually to cherish, comfort, strengthen, and bring it forth to all, according to his utmost ability and the best talents which God has given him.

Let me bespeak, beloved, your most particular and earnest attention to this mark and character of a true Christian, or of one who hath *passed from death unto life*, that so you may examine by it the state of your hearts and lives.

There is nothing we are so apt to deceive ourselves in, if we are not well upon our guard, and well enlightened with the genuine light of truth, as *love towards the brethren*; often calling that *brotherly love*, which is no such thing, but which is possibly the very reverse; whereby we do essential mischief to our eternal interests.

Thus, for example; the mere natural man sometimes fancies that he has *brotherly love*, because he has much *natural tenderness and affection* towards some particular persons, to whom he is united by particular natural ties, either of blood, of friendship, or of worldly interest.

But such *natural affection*, it is well to be observed, is a thing totally distinct from what is called, in the Scriptures, *brotherly love*, or *charity*; and therefore we fre-

quently find, that very wicked persons have as much, or possibly more, of such *natural affection*, than real regenerate Christians; according to those words of our Lord, "sinners also love those that love them, and sinners also do good to those that do good to them."*

Natural affection, therefore, is a principle totally distinct from the affection of Gospel charity, or *brotherly love*. For *natural affection* is a mere animal instinct, common alike to the just and to the unjust, to them that *are passed from death unto life*, and to them who know nothing of such a passage; yea, *natural affection* is even common to man with the beasts that perish; for we find that the beasts, even those which are most fierce and savage, are attached, by strong *natural sympathies*, towards their young and towards one another.

Do not, however, misunderstand me, as if I here meant to censure or debase the principle of *natural affection*, *sympathy*, and *tenderness*, whether amongst men, or amongst beasts. This is far from my design and meaning. Such principles and affections have their uses in their proper times and places, and when kept in due order of subordination to higher affections and principles. All I wish here to observe, and to lead you to observe, is this, that *natural affection* is not *Gospel charity*; *natural tenderness* is not *brotherly love*; *natural feeling and sympathy* is not *spiritual grace and evangelical virtue*; and that, of consequence, before we can attain to that measure of Christian purity and perfection, implied by *loving the brethren*, we must attain to some higher and

* Luke vi. 32, 33.

more heavenly principle than that of mere *natural affection, tenderness, feeling, and sympathy.*

But methinks I hear you ask, What then is this higher and more heavenly principle, which is distinct from mere *natural affection*? It has been already shown, in what was observed concerning the first Christians. It is to regard *that* in others, *which is born of God*, and to call *that* a *brother*. It is to regard, therefore, in one another, *the divine image and likeness*, and to love and cherish it accordingly. It is to be determined in our likings and dislikings, our affections and disaffections, no longer by mere natural or temporal principles, such as are those of the flesh and of this world; but by spiritual and eternal principles, such as regard the family, body, and kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Behold here the great mark of distinction between the love which influences the mere *natural man*, and that which influences the real and *heaven-born Christian*!—The mere *natural man* loves according to blind and partial instinct. The Christian loves according to an enlightened and universal principle of charity. The mere *natural man* calls him *brother*, to whom he is attached by blood, by natural friendship, or by interest. The Christian calls him *brother*, to whom he is attached by spiritual bonds of faith and love, in the same God and Redeemer. What the *natural man*, therefore, loves in another, is somewhat merely of the flesh, or of this world. What the Christian loves in another, is somewhat of the Spirit, and of another world. The *natural man* loves the outward person, or personal qualities, of

another. The Christian loves the inward spirit, or spiritual qualities, that is, the *divine image and likeness*. Thus the love of the *natural man* is grounded in mere nature, and has no higher origin and end. But the love of the true Christian ascends high above nature: its source is from heaven and the God of heaven; and its end, like its origin, is eternal, being rooted in the eternal principles of justice and judgment, of order and uprightness, of sincerity and truth; which constitute the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ, and being active, operative, and fruitful in good works, according to such principles.

To conclude: Let me earnestly recommend to you, beloved, to try and prove your Christian faith, and the ground of your Christian hopes, and whether you are *passed from death unto life*, by the marks and characters of *brotherly love*, as above described.

This is a sure test, which will not deceive you; and without this, there is no other test on which you may safely depend. It is not, you may be well aware, a mere *nominal faith* or profession: it is not because you belong to this or that body of Christians, as distinguished from others by a name or a form: it is not because you have much warmth of natural affection, tenderness, and attachment towards particular persons; still less is it because you have a natural zeal for *holy things*, and can put up holy prayers to God *with your lips*, and can *talk learnedly* about God and the things of his kingdom: it is not, I say, for any or for all of these things, that you can hope for acceptance in God's sight; for all these

qualifications may be the qualifications of very wicked persons, who have no part in the holy family, brotherhood, and kingdom of Jesus Christ, and therefore are not *passed from death unto life*.

There is, then, but this one single qualification, which can be a safe and solid ground of your hope and trust, viz. *brotherly love*. But be sure examine yourselves well concerning this qualification, and take heed that you be not deceived respecting it. Mark especially the distinction above pointed out, between mere *natural affection* and *Gospel charity*. *Natural affection* is of itself a mere *dead* thing before God, and receives all its *true life* from *charity*. Howbeit, charity, or brotherly love, does not destroy *natural affection*: it only quickens, sanctifies it, and makes it eternal: it also renders its operations more regular, constant, and orderly. Ask yourselves, therefore, over, and over, some such questions as these: What is it that I love in another? Is it the *divine image and likeness*, or is it only something of nature? Do I love my neighbour, not because he is rich, not because he is learned, not because he is esteemed and honourable in the eyes of men, not because he is agreeable to my own natural temper and complexion, and still less because he is united to me by the bonds of blood and relationship? but do I love him because he loves God; because I see in him a Godlike spirit and temper; because he is humble, just, sincere, upright, faithful, fearful of offending God, and seeking to attain unto a Godlike nature? Do I therefore regard, chiefly and principally, in my fellow-creatures, the *divine image and like-*

ness? and is it become the continual labour and delight of my life, and of all my actions, to administer, in some way or other, according to my talents, to the bringing forth, perfecting, comforting, and cherishing such *divine image and likeness*?

And inasmuch as I cannot love what is of God, unless I be of God myself; inasmuch as I cannot have any respect for God's *image and likeness* in another, until I myself am formed into his *image and likeness*; is it lastly become my daily labour and endeavour to be made a child of God myself, that so I may the better love his children as my brethren?

Some such few questions as these, seriously proposed and answered, would soon enable us to determine our state of advancement in the divine favour, and how far we were *passed from death unto life*. May we all, then, through the divine grace and mercy, be led to this serious examination of our hearts and lives, that so we may all attain unto the unspeakable comfort of knowing that we are indeed *passed from death unto life*!

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

THE GREAT HOUSEHOLDER.

SERMON IV.

Matt. xxi. 33.

Hear another parable ; there was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

THERE are several particulars in these words which demand particular consideration. There is mention made of a *householder*, of *planting a vineyard*, of *hedging it round about*, of *digging a wine-press in it*, of *building a tower*, of *letting it out to husbandmen*, and of *going into a far country*.

Each of these particulars, we must be forced to confess, is full of wisdom, and each contains a wisdom peculiar to itself. God cannot speak any thing superfluous.

or in vain. Whatsoever comes from his mouth must needs have in it a deep and distinct meaning, and a meaning of use to man. Man, therefore, who is wise, will consider this meaning, and knowing that the *word of God* is the *word of eternal life*, he will deal with it accordingly. He will meditate upon it, and digest it well in his own mind. He will be sure that he comprehends and understands it aright. If he finds any difficulty herein, it will only increase his earnestness to have the difficulty removed. He will be more urgent in prayer to the God of the word, that his eyes may be opened to see wondrous things out of his law.* And the God of the word will not fail to hear his prayer, and to open his eyes, according as it is written, “*Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the scriptures.*”†

The first particular in the above words which demands our attention is the *householder*, and to the consideration of this particular I mean to confine myself in my present discourse.

The Lord calls himself a *householder* in regard to the spiritual *house*, his church, and as having the supreme rule, government, and direction in all things relating to that spiritual house.

This spiritual house, the church, is that congregation of men throughout the face of the whole earth, who are influenced and guided by eternal principles of justice and of judgment, derived from the word of God, agreeable to

* Psalm cxix. 18.

† Luke xxiv. 45.

the Lord's description, where he says, "*My mother and my brethren, (that is, my family or household,) are these which hear the word of God and do it.**"

It is not wood and stone therefore which constitutes a church, properly speaking; neither is it any particular ceremony or form of worship; nor yet any particular doctrine, or form of speculative faith: all these things may exist in all perfection, and yet there may be nothing of God's church: the reason is, *God's church* consists of spiritual and living principles of eternal mercy, goodness, charity, and truth, derived from his word, and operative in the lives of those *who hear and keep it*.

The whole race of mankind throughout the earth may be considered as divided into two great families, one consisting of all such as fear God, and keep his commandments in heart and life; the other consisting of such as do not fear God and keep his commandments in heart and life, but only in word and gesture.

The eye of man cannot at all discern between these two families, so as to distinguish in all cases the one from the other, or who belongs to the one, and who to the other; but the *eye* of God discerns them clearly, and distinguishes them most minutely; I know, saith he, my sheep; † and seen by that eye, they are as different as light and darkness, or as heaven and hell. They are *the sheep on the right hand, and the goats on the left*.

The family of those who fear God, and keep his commandments in heart and life, is called his church, or

* Luke viii. 21.

† John x. 16.

household. *My sheep, saith Christ, hear my voice.** This family, howsoever separated as to place or distance, is closely united as to mind or spirit; and howsoever divided by *external* forms and ceremonies of worship, or by *external* articles and confessions of faith, is yet *internally* one family, *undivided*, by virtue of a pure love towards God and towards each other.

The cause, as well as the centre, of this undivided union of this holy family, is God himself, and his *life*. The reason is, each member of this blessed family respects God and his life in the highest. The will of God is their will, and the wisdom of God is their wisdom; and by this one will and one wisdom they are intimately united with God, and thereby with each other, agreeable to what is expressed in the prayer of Christ, where he says, speaking of this family, *That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us †*

For as in the natural body of man there is an infinite variety of organs and of members, which are yet all united in one, by partaking of the one common life of the soul or spirit, even so it is in the spiritual body of Christ, which is his *church* or *household*. The members of this body are of an infinite variety; but inasmuch as they all partake of the one common life of God, as their soul or spirit, therefore they form one single and undivided body.

* John x. 27.

† John xvii. 21.

Here then we may see how the Lord Jesus Christ is the great *householder*, and why he calls himself by that significative name. He has the supreme rule, government, and direction, in this his church or household, by virtue of that one common life of *love* and *wisdom*, which the members thereof receive from him. For inasmuch as the will of Jesus Christ is the will of the church, and the wisdom of Jesus Christ is the wisdom of the church, it must needs be that Jesus Christ must be all in all in the church, and thus have all power, dominion, sovereignty, and guidance therein.

Not that it is to be understood as if this power, dominion, sovereignty, and guidance of Jesus Christ was arbitrary or compulsive. This is not the case; nor doth Jesus Christ ever exercise, or is willing to exercise, any such arbitrary and compulsive authority. He leaves all his children *free*, and he wills them to continue so. He doth not require any *forced* service, but the service of a *perfect freedom*. “*The princes of the Gentiles*, saith he, *exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you.*”* They who serve him from compulsion, from that moment separate themselves from his family, and become those *hirelings*, of whom it is written, “*The hireling fleeth because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.*”† The reason is, none can be of the family of the blessed Jesus, but they who serve him from a principle of love, and the service of love is the service of pure liberty and freedom. Therefore the Lord saith,

* Matt. xx. 25.

† John x. 13.

in another place, "*If the Son shall make you free, there are ye free indeed.*"*

But though the dominion of Jesus Christ, as the great *householder* of his church and family, is not arbitrary or compulsive, yet it is not hereby to be understood as if it was not most *full* and *complete*. Its *fulness* and *completeness* consist in this, that there is a fulness and completeness of all blessing, of all protection, of all deliverance from evil and error, and of all establishment in heavenly virtues, graces, and powers, continually communicated from the *divine householder* to the *household*. *All power*, saith the blessed Jesus, *is given unto me in heaven and in earth*,† by which he doubtless meant *all power* of blessing, of protection, and of deliverance. The members of his household are made partakers of this *divine power*, and become sensible of its wonderful efficacy, according as it is written, *To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God*.‡

Uniting themselves to the will and wisdom of their most *high* and *holy* Lord, they perceive herein a fulness of all heavenly consolation and guidance. Separating themselves from whatever is contrary to that will and wisdom, they are convinced they have deliverance from all evil and error. Whilst the life and love of God is their life and love, they know that no mischief can befall them. Whilst the wisdom and truth of God

* John viii. 36.

† Matt. xxviii. 18.

‡ John i. 12.

is their wisdom and truth, they know that no delusion can deceive and mislead them.

Not that this *household* of God, though under the immediate keeping and protection of the *divine Householder*, is to be understood as being totally exempt from sorrows and from *perplexities*, for it endures many : but then herein are fulfilled the words of its God, “*In the world ye shall have tribulation;*”* and again, “*Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.*”† The sorrows and perplexities, therefore, of this heavenly household, are distinct from the sorrows and perplexities of those who are not of that household; and they are distinct in this, that sooner or later, the *trouble* of the former is turned, by the divine householder, into joy, and their *perplexity* into the clearness of satisfactory conviction respecting the providences of God. As the *sorrow and perplexity of the world therefore worketh death*, so the sorrow and perplexity of those who are of the family of Jesus Christ, worketh life and peace, or, as the apostle expresseth it, “*Their light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*”‡

What hath been here said concerning the *church* or *household* of God *in general*, is true of, and may easily be applied to the church in every *individual*. Every individual man becometh a *church* or *household* of the most high God, in proportion as he *knoweth* and *loveth*

* John xvi. 33.

† John xvi. 20.

‡ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

that God. And so far as every individual becometh such a church or household, so far he experienceth of the blessing, protection, guidance, and deliverance of the divine *householder*. For so far the divine householder is all in all to him. He no longer obeys his own will, and consults his own wisdom, but he obeys the will, and consults the wisdom of the God who dwells with him. The will and wisdom of God become thus by degrees his will and wisdom. Herein he finds sure deliverance from evil, error, and misery, and at the same time a gradual elevation into the sphere of the divine blessing, protection, and guidance. From that moment all is sure to go well with him; he rises above the regions of disappointment and uncertainty; and though he may still experience trouble and trial for his further purification, yet, inasmuch as he trusteth all his concerns to the care of the *great householder* in himself, his very troubles and trials are converted into means of eternal good.

To conclude. A question of infinite magnitude will naturally arise in every sincere mind, from what hath been said, viz. Do I belong to the *general* church and household of God? and am I a church and household in *particular*? This question, important as it is, cannot perhaps be answered better than by these further questions: Have I a sincere respect unto the divine *householder* in myself? Do I desire to submit my own will, to be ruled by his will, and my own wisdom to be directed by his wisdom? Is this become the ruling principle of my religion, thus ever to seek the *life* of God above all things.

and to exalt it to dominion in myself? Have I ceased from the vain hope of being saved, because I am a *nominal* member of *this* church, or of *that*, according to the distinctions of men? And do I know that there is no salvation *but in the church of* Jesus Christ; and that the *single* condition of being admitted into this saving church, is to renounce evil, because it is contrary to Jesus Christ, and to love and practise what is good, because it is from Jesus Christ, and leadeth to conjunction with him? Do I ground thus my expectation of acceptance with God, not so much in mere *words*, and *forms*, and *ceremonies* of worship, as in the *sincerity* of my worship, not so much in the *confession of my lips*, as in the *purity of my life*; not so much in *mere speculative opinions*, as in a *hearty and operative love towards God and my neighbour*?

Blessed is he, whose heart shall give him a satisfactory answer to these questions! Blessed is he, who shall have the infinite honour and happiness of belonging to the holy family and household of Jesus Christ! Blessed is he, who is able to call Jesus Christ his *householder*, and to trust in him accordingly!

And may we all be wise to secure to ourselves this blessing! AMEN.

ON THE
SPIRITUAL VINEYARD
OF THE
LORD'S PLANTING.

SERMON V.

Matt. xxi. 33.

Hear another parable : There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

IN the preceding discourse, I endeavoured to show what we are here to understand by the term *householder*, and how this significative name is applied to the Lord, to denote his entire dominion and rule in his *household*, the church.

I shall now proceed to consider the next particular which presents itself in these words of the parable, viz. the *planting a vineyard*, and point out the lesson of holy

and edifying instruction, which the Lord intended herein for all his true disciples.

There is much mention made of *vineyards*, of *vines*, of *grapes*, and of *wine*, in the sacred Scriptures; but perhaps few people consider, as they ought, that by these things are signified, and meant to be expressed, spiritual and heavenly things relating to the Lord and his *church*.

That *vineyard* hath such a spiritual signification, must be evident to every one who will read, with any degree of serious attention, the 5th chapter of the prophet Isaiah, where the prophet begins with saying, "*Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved, touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill.*"* And after describing several particulars concerning this *vineyard*, and especially concerning its unfruitfulness, he concludes his parable with these words: "*The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant; and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.*"†

From this passage, it must be very plain to every intelligent mind, that by *vineyard* is here signified and described the Lord's *church*, as to those spiritual and living principles which constitute the church; and therefore, when this *vineyard* became unfruitful, or when those spiritual principles were perverted and abused, it is said,

* What is here rendered a *very fruitful hill*, is in the original בקרן בן-שמן—which is literally, *In a horn the son of oil*.

† Verse 7.

“He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.”*

Agreeable to this spiritual sense and signification of the word *vineyard*, it is written again in the same prophet, speaking of the pure and uncorrupted church, “*In that day answer ye her, A vineyard of pure wine, I JEHOVAH do keep it, I will water it every moment:*” † and again, speaking of the church in its state of trial and trouble, “*In the vineyards there is no singing nor rejoicing:*” ‡ and again, speaking of the church perverted and desolated, “*JEHOVAH will enter into judgment with the elders, for ye have burned up the vineyard:*” § and again, in Jeremiah, “*Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard; they have made it a wilderness:*” || and agreeable to the same sense of the word, the Lord calls himself a *vine*, saying, “*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*”**

From this spiritual sense and signification then of the word *vineyard*, as used in the sacred writings, it will appear very manifest to every thinking person, what is meant by *planting a vineyard*, as ascribed to the *householder* in the words of my text. The *householder*, it has been already shewn, denotes the Lord Jesus Christ as the supreme *head* and ruler of his church; and by his *plant-*

* Isaiah v. 7.

† Chap. xxvii. 2, 3.

‡ Chap. xvi. 10.

§ Chap. iii. 14.

|| Chap. xii. 19.

** John xv. 1.

ing a vineyard therefore nothing else can possibly be signified or understood, but the *implantation of spiritual truth from him and his word in the church, whereby spiritual good, which is the saving good of holy love and charity, may be produced and rendered fruitful and operative.*

May I bespeak your most serious attention to this particular of the parable, according to this its spiritual sense and interpretation!

The church of God cannot possibly exist, either *generally or individually*, without the *knowledge of God*, and the knowledge of God cannot possibly be derived from any other source than his *holy word*, as it is written, *The Lord giveth wisdom, out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.*

The *true vine* therefore is the genuine truth of God's *holy word*, and the *true vineyard* are all they who receive this truth, and suffer it to grow in their hearts, and bring forth fruit in their lives.

Jesus Christ brought this *vine* down from heaven, when the eternal *Word was made flesh*; and he willed it to be planted throughout the earth, when he said unto his apostles, "*Go teach all nations, and preach the gospel to every creature.*"* From that time it grew and flourished and became a great tree in the earth, and the men of the vineyard did eat plentifully of its heavenly fruits, and were nourished thereby in the wisdom, peace, and righteousness of an immortal life.

Jesus Christ doeth the same at this day—his *Gospel*

* Matt. xxviii. 19. Mark xvi. 15.

is still the same *heavenly vine* that it was seventeen hundred years ago—the truth of God cannot change, or be affected by the vicissitudes of time : wheresoever therefore there is a believing heart, there the *heavenly vine* is still planted, and there also it still bringeth forth its heavenly, blessed, and eternal fruits.

But do not all Christians *alike* receive the truth of God ? Is not the Gospel preached to all ? And are not all therefore the *vineyard* of the Lord of Hosts, having the *true vine* implanted in them, and partaking of its fruits ?

I answer—All Christians *alike* receive the *knowledge of God* in their *understandings*, and so far as they do this, so far the *heavenly vine* is implanted in them, and they become in some sense the *vineyard* of God ; but it doth not follow from hence that all Christians partake alike of the *fruits of the vineyard*.

We know, from the unerring testimony of the word of God, that there is *the vine of Sodom*,* as well as *the vine of Sibmah* ; †—there is the *strange vine*, ‡ as well as the *noble vine* ; §—there is also the *empty vine* ; || as well as the *fruitful vine* ; **—and therefore, though every one is in some sense a *vineyard* of God, as having the *heavenly vine* of the knowledge of God implanted in his *understanding*, yet the *nature* and the *fruit of this vine* is

* Deut. xxxii. 32.

† Isaiah xvi. 8, 9.

‡ Jer. ii. 21.

§ Jer. ii. 21.

|| Hosea x. 1.

** Isaiah xxxii. 2.

different with all, and will depend altogether upon other circumstances.

In some cases *this vine* may be wholly *barren* and *without fruit*—in other cases it may yield fruit of a *poisonous* and *noxious* quality, which are the *wild and sour grapes** spoken of by the prophet, and the *grapes of gall* † described by Moses—in other cases it may yield *good grapes*, from whence is produced that *heavenly vine* of which the Lord speaks to his disciples, when he saith, *I will drink no more henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.* ‡

But methinks I hear you ask, What is the cause of this difference in the *fruits of the vineyard*? If the same *vine of heaven* be implanted in all, how comes it to pass that it doth not bring forth the *same fruit* in all, both in quantity and quality? Can the *vine of Sibmah* be changed into the *vine of Sodom*, or can the *choice vine* become the *strange vine*?

I answer—The nature and fruit of the vine must ever depend upon the nature of the soil or ground in which it is implanted, and upon the culture thereof—or to speak plainly, and without a metaphor, the *knowledge of God and his truth*, implanted in man's *understanding*, will always take its *quality* and *fruitfulness* from the *love of God and his goodness*, as operative in man's *will* and in his *life*.

* Isaiah v. 4 Ezek. xviii. 2.

† Deut. xxxvii. 32.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 29.

The knowledge of God without the love of God is totally barren, and can produce no fruit—the love of God is the only soil in which the truth of God can possibly grow and flourish—“*If a man love me,*” saith the blessed Jesus, “*he will keep my words :*”* the reason is, the *love* of Jesus delights in the *words* of Jesus, and therefore cherisheth and keepeth them ; but if this love be wanting, there is then nothing left by which the words or truth of Jesus can be kept ; the consequence is, they become barren, and unfruitful, and dead.

Here then we may see a reason why the *choice vine* may become a *strange vine*, and instead of bringing forth *good grapes*, may bring forth *wild grapes*. If the *knowledge* of God be not cherished by *the love of God* ; or in other words, if the manifestation of the truth of God in man’s understanding, be not cherished by the desire of heavenly good in his will, the consequence must certainly be, that the knowledge and the truth will be perverted and corrupted through the natural evils predominant in the mind. In this case there will either be no fruitfulness at all, or a fruitfulness in much evil and iniquity, as it is expressed in the prophet, “ He looked for judgment, but behold oppression ; for righteousness, but behold a cry.” † and thus the *noble vine* will be turned into a *strange vine*, as it is written in another prophet, “ I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed ; how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me ?” ‡

* John xiv. 23.

† Isaiah v. 7.

‡ Jer. ii. 2f. †

To conclude. What hath been now said, beloved, demands your most serious consideration as Christians, and as men. In each of you hath been planted, by the *great householder*, the *heavenly vine* of evangelical truth and knowledge.

Your hearts are the respective *vineyards* in which this plant of heaven and immortality was intended to grow, and bring forth its blessed fruits, that you may *eat thereof, and live for ever*.

You have no one concern either in time or in eternity, which will admit of the smallest comparison with that which respects this *vine*.

If it flourishes and bears its *proper fruit*, all then will go well with you; you will feed upon that fruit; you will be nourished by it in your *inner man*, with all the graces and virtues of an heavenly and everlasting life; the *great householder* will bless it to you with his continual blessing; and in the language of the inspired penman, "Your treading shall reach to the vintage, and the vintage shall reach to the sowing time."*

The contrary, however, must come to pass, if this, your *heavenly vine*, doth *not* flourish—in this case your spiritual life must perish with *that* which can alone support it; if your *vine* becomes a *dead branch*, ye will become *dead branches* also, and in you will be fulfilled that terrible prophecy of old, "They shall also build houses, but not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof."†

* Levit. xxvi. 5.

† Zeph. i. 13.

But you ask, How then shall we so live, that *our vine may flourish*, and not *die*?

Infinitely important as the question is, it has been already answered in what was observed above. Live so, that your *knowledge of God* may not be left destitute of the *life and the love of God*. To the *truths* of the Gospel which you have received, join the devout *practice* thereof, that so the evangelical powers and sanctities manifested in your *understandings*, may influence also your *wills* and your *actions*. For this purpose take heed of resting your salvation on mere *thought* or *belief alone*, independent of work. Remember, that it is the *supreme love* or *ruling desire*, which constitutes the man, and every man is, in the sight of God, what he principally *loves* or *desires* to be. If then you are wise to join *holy love* to *holy knowledge*, and *heavenly desires* and *doings* to *heavenly thoughts*—if you are wise to *live the life of Christ*, as well as to *understand the doctrine of Christ*, your *vine* will then assuredly live and flourish; “the hills shall be covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof shall be like the goodly cedar trees;”* *it shall give its fruit*, and its fruit shall nourish in you that everlasting life of righteousness, joy, and peace, which the *great householder* implanteth and supporteth in all those who cultivate his *vineyard* by keeping his commandments.

AMEN.

* Psalm lxxx. 10.

ON THE
HEDGE ROUND THE VINEYARD,

AS DENOTING A DISTINCTION OF PRINCIPLES IN THE
REGENERATE LIFE.

SERMON VI.

Matt. xxi. 33.

Hear another parable : There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

IN the two preceding discourses I have endeavoured to shew what we are here to understand by *a certain householder*, and what by his *planting a vineyard* ; I shall now proceed to shew further what is the lesson of instruction intended for us in these words, *He hedged it round about.*

That the *hedge* here spoken of has a *spiritual signification*, must be very plain to every intelligent mind, not only on account of its reference in this place to a *spiritual vineyard*, which is the Lord's church, but also because it is frequently applied in such a spiritual sense in other parts of the sacred scriptures.

Thus saith the Lord in Isaiah, speaking of the church, which through evil of life was become desolate, *I will take away the hedge thereof*,* denoting its entire destruction. Thus also in Ezekiel, speaking of lying or foolish prophets, the Lord saith, *Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel, to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord*;† where it must be very manifest that *hedge* was a spiritual signification, because applied to *the house of Israel*, which is the Lord's church. So again, speaking of the scarcity of goodness and truth in the church, the Lord saith, *I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me, for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none*.‡

From these, and many other similar passages in the sacred scriptures, where mention is made of *hedges*, it must be very evident that *somewhat spiritual* relating to the Lord's kingdom, or church, is intended to be expressed thereby.

* Isaiah v. 5.

† Ezek. xiii. 5.

‡ Ezek. xii. 30.

What that *spiritual somewhat* is, which is signified and expressed by *hedges*, will appear very plain to the most ordinary understanding, from the consideration of a *natural hedge*, its end and use.

Every one knows that a *natural hedge* has two uses; it is intended as a *boundary of distinction or separation*, and it is intended also as a *boundary of defence and security*.

This is the case also with the *spiritual hedge*, with which the vineyard or church of the great householder is encompassed. It is principally for these two purposes, first, for *distinction or separation*, and 2dly, for *defence or security*.

I propose to consider the *spiritual hedge*, under both these views, and 1st, as it serves for *distinction or separation* in the heavenly vineyard.

It has been already shown, in speaking of the great householder and of his household the church, how all mankind are divided into two great families, one consisting of those who fear and serve God in *heart and life*, the *other* of those who do not fear and serve God at all, but only in *words and in gestures*.

The *spiritual hedge*, in the most general sense of it, is what divides or separates between these two families, thus distinguishing between the Lord's *vineyard* and what is *not the vineyard*, so that they may be clearly known and discerned, the one from the other.

This *hedge* of distinction and separation is known only unto God, and not at all unto man. The reason is, because it relates only to the *spirits* of men, or to the

internal man, and not so much to the *natural* or *external* man, and God alone is acquainted with the state of men's spirits, or of their *internal* man, according as it is written, *I know my sheep*.

As to the *external* man, the *hedge* of distinction in the heavenly vineyard is not so manifest. The true members of the Lord's living body, the church, appear *outwardly* like those who are *not* of the church; they are engaged in the same outward callings and professions; they have the same bodily wants and necessities to provide for; they join in the same forms and ordinances of *external* worship.

In like manner they who are *not of the church*, appear *outwardly* like those who are of the church; they assemble together in the same place to adore the same God; they assume the same external appearances of reverence and devotion; they join in the same prayers, read the same holy scriptures, partake of the same sacraments, and repeat the same professions of belief in one eternal God.

But notwithstanding this want of distinction and discrimination in *externals*, between those who are not of the church, and those who are of the church; notwithstanding *the wolf* may assume *the sheep's clothing*, and the *sheep* may be outwardly associated with the *wolf*, so that they cannot be known asunder by man; yet, in the sight of God, and according to the eternal distinctions of the spiritual mind in regard to God and his kingdom, the *hedge of discrimination* in the heavenly vineyard is

drawn so clearly and precisely, that the boundary can never be mistaken.

The Lord, it is therefore written, *knoweth the way of the righteous.** “He discerneth between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.”† His all-piercing eye is fixed perpetually upon man’s *internal* mind; he looketh, not so much at the *external act*, as at the *intention* in which it originates; he sees the objects in which *man’s affections* centre, and he judges of him accordingly; he doth not so much regard *words, verbal professions, external forms and ceremonies, bodily gestures*, and such like *outward semblances of devotion*, for all these things, he knows, may be nothing more than *the whitening of the sepulchre*, or like the fruit of the true vine artificially tied on the thorn and bramble; but what God principally regards at all times is the *heart of man*, or in other words, his *ruling love*, his *fixed and deliberate principle of thought and action*, the *great end of life*, whether temporal or eternal, which he hath chosen for himself. When man therefore offers up prayers and praises, God looketh how much there is of *life and love* in those things; when man reads or hears the holy scriptures, God notes his secret purpose in so doing, and how his *will* is affected thereby; when man repeats professions of faith, God’s eye is upon the real persuasion of his understanding in those professions. Thus it

* Psalm i. 6.

† Mal. iii. 13.

is that the divine householder separates between the pure and the vile, between the clean and the unclean, and draws a *hedge* of manifest and eternal distinction round about his vineyard.

But there is yet *another* sense in which *the hedge of the spiritual vineyard* may be understood, as a boundary of separation and distinction, to which I could wish to turn your present attention, because of its peculiarly edifying importance.

The sense I mean is in regard to every *individual man*, considered as an *individual church* or vineyard of the Lord.

It has been already shewn, in speaking of the vineyard planted by the great *householder*, that every *regenerate man* becomes a *church* or *household* of God *in particular*, answering in all respects to the *church* or *household* of God *in general*.

Of consequence, as in the *general vineyard* there is a *hedge* of distinction and separation, so it is also in the *particular vineyard*; and every real member of the church, whether he is aware of it or not, must of necessity, as being an *individual vineyard* of the great householder, be encompassed by such a *hedge*.

Possibly, beloved, you may never have before considered this subject, nor have thought about this *spiritual hedge* in your own minds. It is time then that you should now consider it, because, as being an eternal truth declared in the word of God, it must needs be infinitely interesting and instructive to you, as to your eternal concerns.

Know then, and be for ever persuaded, that if you are vineyards of the Lord in particular, or, in other words, if you have received his *word of eternal life* into your hearts and understandings, your minds are in this case encompassed with an eternal *hedge of separation and distinction*, whereby you are manifestly and everlastingly discriminated from those who are *not* of the vineyard.

By virtue of this *hedge*, the *mark* of the eternal God is in *your foreheads*, and you are *sealed to be his* for eternity. You are the blessed sheep of his heavenly fold, and are for ever separated from those who are not his sheep. “They are not of the world,” saith the Lord of the vineyard of his true disciples, “even as I am not of the world.”* Thus also he saith of you, “Ye are not of the world.” Ye are separated from its vanities and vices, from its delusive pleasures, and fleeting uncertainties, from the dazzling splendour of its enchanting glory, and the no less dangerous fear of its frowns and reproaches. And ye are born into another kingdom, ye belong to another family, ye are the members of another household, ye have higher ends of life, more blessed hopes and expectations, than this world can supply you with. As to your *outward man*, ye must indeed still for a time remain and act in the world, and for a time appear like those who are not of the vineyard; but as to your *internal man*, ye are *chosen out of the world*, ye are encompassed within *the hedge of my vineyard*; I know

* John xvii. 16.

you to be *my own*, and will preserve you as a separate and distinct people.

But this is not the only sense, in which, as being vineyards of the great householder in particular, you are encompassed individually with the *spiritual hedge* of separation and distinction. There is yet another sense, and this is an infinitely instructive one, in which, according to the words in my text, you may be thus said to be *hedged round about*.

If the Word of God had its right and full effect upon your minds and lives, you must needs have perceived somewhat of this *separation* and *distinction* effected in yourselves. As for example; you were once merely *natural men*, and had only *natural minds*, whilst you were seeking *natural* things alone, and loving this world more than God and heaven; but now, if you have received the Word of God, and are thereby become his *vineyard*, ye are become *new* and *spiritual men*, and have your *spiritual mind* opened and formed, and are desiring and seeking after spiritual things.

I say, then, in this case, ye must have perceived in yourselves somewhat of *distinction and separation*. Ye must have seen how the *new man* in yourselves is distinct from the *old man*. Ye must have observed the boundaries of each principle: ye must have discriminated between them, marking their essential differences and disagreements: ye must have noted how they are contrary, the one to the other; how the one delights in wisdom, the other in folly; how the one loves God

and its neighbour, the other only itself and the world; how the one is an heir of salvation and eternal life, the other of condemnation and eternal misery. Thus ye must have seen and perceived the *hedge* of separation and distinction in your vineyard, between the *new* mind and the *old*, between the *clean* and the *unclean*, between “the man of God, thoroughly furnished unto every good work,” and “the man of sin, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.”

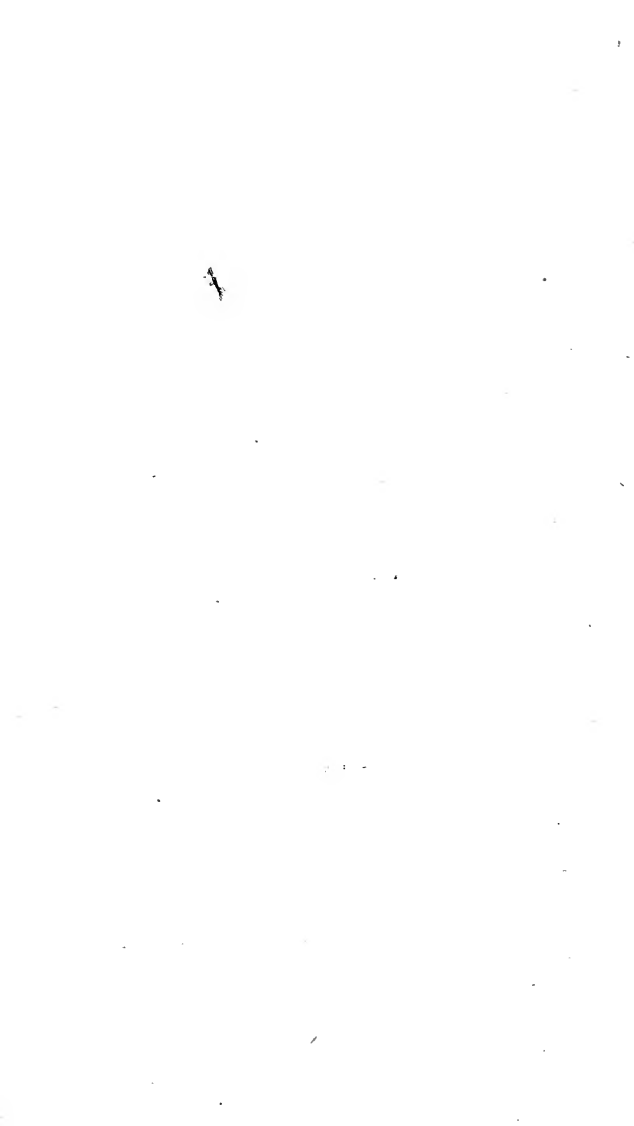
I could now proceed to point out further boundaries of distinction and separation, which take place and form a *hedge* in the vineyard of the great householder, both generally and individually; but leaving these to be the subject of your own meditation, I shall conclude my present discourse with a few remarks on what has been already said.

And, 1st, If all mankind be divided into two great families, of which one is the Lord's vineyard, and the other is not the vineyard; and if these two families be totally distinct and separate from each other, being divided by an eternal *hedge* or *boundary*; how careful and concerned ought we to be, to which of these two families we belong! How anxiously, how scrupulously ought we to examine and consider with ourselves, on which side of the *hedge* we stand; whether on the side *within* the vineyard, or on the side *without* the vineyard, from a firm and full conviction, that our state in eternity will depend upon the sincerity of such examination and consideration!

And, 2dly, If, as vineyards of the Lord in particular, we are each of us encompassed individually with a hedge of distinction and separation in our own minds, whereby we are not only *divided from the world*, but are also *divided from ourselves*, having the principles of our own minds separated and discriminated, the one from the other; if this, I say, be the case, (and the Word of God assures us that it is,) how ought we then to be continually looking at this *eternal hedge* in ourselves! How ought we to examine it, lest at any time it should be *broken down*, and our vineyard laid waste! How anxiously ought we to pray and labour, that it may be preserved *entire*, and if at any time it be *broken*, that it may be quickly and effectually repaired!

Without a *hedge*, it is most certain, there can be no *vineyard*, and without *distinction* and *separation* there can be no *church*. Whensoever the people of God become mixed and confounded with those who are of the world, they will soon cease to be the people of God. It is so likewise in an individual sense. No one can possibly be a living member of Christ, unless he distinguishes in himself, between what is of Christ, and what is not of Christ, and sees clearly this distinction. This is the great and sole difference between the mere *natural* man and the *spiritual*; the natural man makes no such discrimination of principles in himself, and therefore remains a natural man; but the spiritual man both makes the discrimination, and notes it well when he has made it.

May the God of eternal mercy, the great householder, give us all grace to act herein according to the dictates of his own eternal wisdom, that so we may continually rejoice, not only in seeing and confessing that we are the *vineyard of his planting*, but also that he hath *hedged it round about!* AMEN.



ON

THE HEDGE

ROUND ABOUT THE VINEYARD,

AS DENOTING SPIRITUAL DEFENCE.

SERMON VII.

Matt. xxi. 33.

Hear another parable : There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

IT has been already shewn what we are here to understand by a *certain householder* ; what by his *planting a vineyard* ; and what by his *hedging it round about*.

The *householder* is the Lord ; the *vineyard* is his church ; and the *hedge* with which it is encompassed, is that boundary of *separation* and *defence*, whereby the

vineyard is distinguished from what is *not* the vineyard, and, in consequence of such distinction, is protected and secured.

It has been already shewn further, in what way and manner the *hedge about the vineyard* is a *boundary of separation and distinction*. It remains now to be considered in what way and manner it is a *boundary of defence and protection*.

The subject, it must be confessed, is of the utmost importance, and will be regarded as such by every thinking mind; and yet, perhaps, there is no subject which is in general so little attended to, even by those very persons who are most interested in the consideration of it.

Every one may see, that without *defence*, the church of God, whether regarded generally or individually, must needs *perish*. Where there is no *protection*, there can be no *salvation*. The enemies of the church are continually active to *destroy*, and they will *destroy*, if they be not *guarded against*. Can a *city* stand in the *siege*, without *walls*? Or can a *vineyard* be secure without a *hedge*? No more can the church withstand its various adversaries without the *means of withstanding them*.

But though all this be seen clearly, and is obvious to the most ordinary understanding; yet few comparatively, even of those perhaps who are within the church, consider aright wherein its *defence consisteth*. They confess that it cannot stand *without protection*; but they do not know, so as to apprehend distinctly, what is the *nature of that protection*. Some satisfy themselves with think-

ing and saying, that this *protection* is of the *divine providence*, and that God himself is the *defence of his church*. But such persons do not perhaps consider, that the *divine providence* never operates but in and according to *divine order*, and that God himself never acts but by and through *appointed means of acting*.

It is true indeed, and must be eternally true, that without God and *his providence*, the church cannot be protected; no, not for a moment: but it is equally and alike true, that God and *his providence* cannot protect the church without the *means of protection*. For, let me ask, what is the reason why any churches, since the foundation of the world, have grown corrupt, and perished, as we know hath been the case with many? What brought destruction formerly upon the *church at Jerusalem*, the *church at Alexandria*, the *church at Antioch*, and others. God and his providence, we may be very sure, must have been operative to the uttermost, to prevent such destruction; and could the divine operation *alone* have been effectual, not a single church would have suffered injury. The *real cause*, then, of the ruin of these churches was, not because they wanted the protection of God and *his providence*, but because they were left without those *means of defence*, that *hedge* of the spiritual vineyard, without which God and his providence could not defend.

But to bring this matter nearer to ourselves. It has been already shewn, in speaking of the *spiritual vineyard*, that every individual person, who receives the truth of God, and his word, in his heart and understand-

ing, is an *individual church*, and may be considered as such. But let me ask now, What is the reason why some of these *individual churches* fall to decay, and come to destruction, whilst others stand firm and secure?—What is the reason why one man yields to temptation, and another does *not* yield to it; why one *is overcome of evil*, and another overcomes it; why some have *power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh*, whilst others are so weak and powerless, that, instead of spiritual *victory and triumph*, they are the continual subjects of spiritual *captivity and imprisonment*?—God and *his providence* are alike watchful over all, and willing to protect all; and therefore the cause of the difference in the above cases cannot be imputed to God: it must then be imputed solely to this—that some men are provided with the *means of spiritual defence*, whilst others are *not* provided with them.

From these considerations, a question of infinite magnitude will naturally arise in the mind of every serious person, who has any real concern about his eternal well-being, viz. What are the *true means* of spiritual protection and defence; and how may we so order our lives and conversations as to *acquire* those means?

Weighty as this question is, it has its full and complete answer in the words of my text, well understood, respecting the *hedge of the spiritual vineyard*, as I shall now proceed briefly to shew.

It has been already seen, how, by the *hedge* of the spiritual vineyard is meant a *boundary of separation and*

distinction, to divide it from that which is *not the vineyard*.

This boundary of separation and distinction, whether considered generally or individually, implies, that the church notes and marks well in itself, the distinct qualities of good and evil—that it discriminates carefully between what is of God, and what is not of God—that it separates, with the nicest discernment, between the clean and the unclean, between the precious and the vile—that, in short, it ascertains and establishes in itself, the eternal limits of the kingdom of heaven, as founded in the eternal laws of justice and judgment, goodness and truth; and the eternal limits also of the opposite kingdom of darkness, as founded in all the ignorance, error, and mischief of unsanctified thoughts and impure affections.

Behold here, then, the *true and the only means of the church's defence and protection*, whether it be regarded in a general or in a particular view!

It is to keep it *hedged about* with this *hedge* of eternal separation and distinction, that so it may not be mixed and confounded with that which is not the church, but be kept at all times in the most perfect state of distinction and discrimination.

You are surprised to hear, that *separation and distinction* can be any cause and means of spiritual *defence and protection*. It is necessary, then, that I be a little more particular in explaining myself.

Know, then, and be fully assured, from the authority of the word of God, that there is but one cause or ground

of all spiritual weakness and infirmity, and that is, an evil love and an evil life ; or, in other words, evil and corrupt affections, joined to foolish and unwise thoughts, which have no higher origin, and regard no higher end, than the world and the flesh.

On the other hand, know, and be alike fully assured, from the same high authority, that there is but one cause or ground of all spiritual strength and stability, and that is, a righteous love and a righteous life ; or, in other words, righteous and pure affections, joined to all heavenly knowledge and truth, which have both their origin and their end in the eternal God, the Father of the spirits of all flesh.

If you examine the subject ever so attentively, and with ever so deep a reach of thought and understanding, you will never be able to discover any other source or cause of *spiritual weakness* and of *spiritual strength*, than the above.

Here, then, you may see clearly, if you are so disposed, the truth of what was just now asserted, that *spiritual separation* and *distinction* are the sure and only means of *spiritual defence* and *protection*.

For separation and distinction alone tend to remove all evil love, all impure affections, all foolish thoughts, and thereby all spiritual infirmity. On the other hand, they tend to exalt and to establish all holy love, all heavenly affections, all wise and sanctified thoughts, and thereby all spiritual strength and stability.

If you inquire, therefore, what is the true cause why any church, at any time, has become weak, and has thus

perished for want of defence, you will never be able to discover any other than this :—It has not attained to, and preserved due *separation* and *distinction*—it has not been careful to keep its spiritual principles of life and love unmixed and unconfused—it has suffered the earthy and worldly principles to enter in and defile the heavenly—it has let the selfish and carnal affections of an unholy love pollute the celestial and spiritual affections of the love of God. Impurity hath thus been mingled with purity, folly with wisdom, earth with heaven, weakness with strength, darkness with light, death with life.—There has been no discrimination, no separation, no purification ; of consequence, there could be no defence ; and the spiritual vineyard being thus left *without a hedge*, it must needs follow, that “ all they that go by would pluck off her grapes : the wild boar out of the wood would root it up, and the wild beasts of the field devour it.”*

On the other hand, if you inquire what is the true cause why any church, whether in a general or individual sense, has at any time prospered, and been defended and protected against its spiritual foes, you will never be able to discover any other than this :—It has attained to, and maintained, due *separation* and *distinction* of spiritual principles in itself—it has “ set to each its *bounds*, that it *cannot pass*” —it has divided, with exact discrimination, between the heavenly and the earthy, the spiritual and the natural, the wise and the unwise, the living

* Psalm lxxx. 12, 13.

and the dead—it hath not suffered in itself any abominable mixtures of the pure and impure; but noting all its affections and thoughts, what is their distinct nature, origin, and end, and arranging them accordingly, it has brought them all into the subordination of order. Thus it has provided for itself an *eternal hedge* of defence and protection; whereby it is made that blessed church, of which it is written, “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”*

To conclude. Do you wish, Beloved, (I address you as a church in general, and also each as a church in particular;) do you wish that your spiritual vineyard should be ever *secure* and *protected*, and thereby bring forth its proper fruits of eternal peace and comfort in your own minds? Remember then well, whence true protection cometh, that it is from the great almighty Redeemer alone, through the means of spiritual *separation* and *distinction*! Remember also, that in all *mixture* there is *weakness*; in all *confusion* there is *infirmity*. Nothing causeth strength but *arrangement* and *order*; and arrangement and order cannot have place without previous *separation* and *discrimination*. Begin then with noting well the several principles of life and love in yourselves, according to the light which is given you from above. And when you have well noted and marked them, so as to know each distinctly from the other, then give to each its proper place and arrangement. Let the love of God and of your neighbour be above all, and distinct from

* Matt. xvi. 18.

all. Let every other love administer and be subordinate thereto. Observe the same regulation as to your knowledges. Let the knowledge of God be accounted distinct from, and more excellent than every other knowledge; and take heed that every other knowledge be kept in a state of inferiority and subjection thereto. Worldly knowledge will not hurt you, nor worldly affection, only so far as you suffer them to mix themselves with heavenly knowledge and heavenly affection. If they so mix themselves, you are undone; your spiritual life must perish in the mixture, *as a vineyard without a hedge*. But if you are wise to keep them *unmixed*, so as always to distinguish them asunder, and to set the heavenly above the earthy, the spiritual above the natural, the pure above the impure; all then will go well with you, and your *vineyard* will be preserved and flourish.

Remember, then, *the hedge* of the spiritual vineyard, and you will then always dwell safely under the divine protection, and be enabled to sing continually that blessed song, "The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life: of whom then shall I be afraid?"* AMEN.

* Psalm xxvii. 1.



ON THE
SPIRITUAL WINE-PRESS,

AS DENOTING AN EXAMINATION OF THE MOTIVES WHICH
GIVE BIRTH TO ACTIONS.

SERMON VIII.

Matt. xxi. 33.

Hear another parable : There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

IT has been already considered, what is here meant by a *certain householder*, what by the *vineyard he planted*, and what by the *hedge* with which he hedged it round about. I shall now proceed to shew further, the edifying lesson of wisdom and instruction intended for us in the next operation ascribed to the householder, respecting his vineyard; where it is said, He “ digged a wine-press in it.

That the *wine-press* here spoken of, as well as the *hedge* already explained, hath a *spiritual* signification, and is to be understood *spiritually*, is very plain, not only from its relation to the vineyard, whereby is meant the Lord's spiritual church, but also because it is *spiritually* applied in other parts of the sacred scriptures.

Thus, in Isaiah, speaking of the church which the Lord had planted, it is written, "My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; and he planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a *wine-press* therein."* Thus also in Joel, speaking of the church which was overflowed with wickedness, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: get ye down, for the *press* is full, the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great."† So again, in the prophet Hosea, speaking of the church which was become desolate, "The floor and the *wine-press* shall not feed them, and the new wine shall deceive them."‡ Lastly, in Jeremiah, describing the church's destruction through the prevalence of evil and of false doctrines, "The spoiler is fallen upon thy vintage: I have caused wine to fail from the *wine-presses*; none shall tread with shouting; their shouting shall be no shouting."§

In all the above passages, it must be very plain to every thinking mind, that by *wine-press*, somewhat *spiritual*, relating to the Lord's spiritual church, is intended

* Isaiah v. 1, 2.

† Joel iii. 13.

‡ Hosea ix. 1, 2.

§ Jer. xlviii. 32, 33.

to be expressed ; otherwise, how could it ever have been mentioned in the word of God, which can only treat of things spiritual and divine ?

But though the reason of every serious mind may see evidently, that *somewhat spiritual* must needs be signified by a *wine-press*, whensoever mention is made of it in the Word of God ; yet it will not, perhaps, be so easy to see what that *spiritual somewhat* is, which is signified. None can see this, but they who well consider the subject in their own minds ; and none will well consider the subject, but they who, from a sense of the infinite importance of the things of God, are led continually to say, with the holy man of old, “ Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law ; yea, I shall keep it with my whole heart.”*

Howbeit, since it is of the utmost importance that the Word of God should be clearly seen and understood ; and since I am fully persuaded, beloved, there are many amongst you, who are desirous to see and understand it, that so you may profit by it in your lives, and attain unto the blessedness and purity of that *wisdom which is from above* ; I shall gladly endeavour, in my following discourse, to open to your view the true sense and signification of the *wine-press* spoken of in my text, and thereby lead you to all that spiritual instruction and edification which the word was intended to convey.

* Psalm cxix. 33, 34.

Every one can see what is the use of a *natural* wine-press, and from hence the serious and thoughtful mind will at once clearly discover what is meant by the *spiritual wine-press*.

The *natural wine-press*, we know, is necessary to separate the juice of the grape from its grosser and more impure parts. Hence the true *nature* and *quality* of the grape is discovered and made known. Hence also *wine* is produced, which is a substance altogether different from the grape itself. Thus by means of the *wine-press* we are enabled to discern and to distinguish the good grape from the evil grape, the sweet from the sour, the ripe from the unripe, which were not before distinguishable. And thus also we are further enabled to procure a liquor of excellent and extraordinary quality, and of singular use to the life of man, if it be properly and moderately applied.

Beloved, let not nature, or rather the God of nature, give us instruction in vain. Let us hearken to the voice of the *wine-press*. Let us ponder the lessons of the eternal wisdom which it teacheth, that we also may be wise and live.

Who cannot see, if he be so disposed, from the use of the *natural wine-press*, what is meant by the *spiritual wine-press*? Who cannot discern, that the *spiritual wine-press* is nothing else but *serious consideration and careful examination of our works* in the sight of God, and by the light of his *Word*, that so we may discover their real and true quality, whether they are good or evil?

Let me bespeak your most earnest attention to this meaning and use of the *spiritual wine-press*.

It has been already abundantly shewn, that by the *vineyard* is meant the *church*, both generally and individually. The *fruits of the vineyard* then, or grapes, must needs mean the *works* of the church, or, what is the same thing, the *works* of those who constitute the church. But the fruits of the vineyard may be of divers qualities. They may be *sweet* and *pure* grapes, or they may be *sour* and *wild* grapes; and no one can distinguish from their outward appearance what is their quality, whether they be *sweet* and *pure*, or whether they be *sour* and *wild*.

It is the same with man's works—they also are of different qualities—some men do *good works*, which are *really* good in the sight of God;—others do works which appear *like* good works *outwardly*, but are not so *inwardly*—they are good in the sight of men, but they are not good in the sight of God: and therefore it is written of these works, “I have not found thy works perfect before God.”*

But how now shall we know the difference between a work which is *really* and *inwardly* good in the sight of God, and a work which is only *outwardly* good in the sight of men?

The question is of infinite concern to all who are seeking salvation and eternal life, inasmuch as salvation and eternal life can belong only to those whose works are good in the sight of God.

* Rev. iii. 2.

Howbeit, the answer to the question is plain—Bring your works to the *spiritual wine-press*, as you bring your grapes to the *natural wine-press*. The natural wine-press, you know, separates the pure juice of the grape from its grosser parts, and thereby discovers its true quality. Even so the spiritual wine-press of *serious consideration and attentive examination of your works* will separate the spirit of them from their *external appearances*, and will thus soon discover to you what is their *inward* quality, whether they are good, or not good, in the sight of God.

This is what the Lord meant when he said, “Every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprovèd; but he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”*

Beloved, you are every day doing some kind of works, or bringing forth some kind of fruit in your spiritual vineyard. These works, or this fruit, must be either good or evil; they must therefore either be such as will save you, or such as will condemn you; they must be either bringing you nearer towards God and heaven, or separating you further from God and heaven.

But have you ever been at the pains to discover the *internal nature and quality* of these your works? Have you ever, for this purpose, brought them to the *spiritual wine-press*? Do you know thereby whether your works be *of God*, and *wrought in God*, or of your-

* John iii. 20, 21.

selves, and wrought in yourselves, without God? Do you discern what is *within* in your works, what spirit it is, whether it be the spirit of heaven, or the spirit of hell; whether it be light or darkness, good or evil, life or death?

If you have not as yet made any such examination of your works, nor any such discovery of their internal spirit, wo then be unto you! for ye have every reason in the world to suppose, in this case, that your works are *inwardly* evil, howsoever they may appear *outwardly* good. At least ye must needs be in ignorance of their quality, and of consequence cannot know but ye may be *hatching cockatrice eggs, and weaving the spider's web*, of which it is written, "He that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed, breaketh out into a viper."* For without *serious examination*, how is it possible you should tell whether the *viper* be in your works or not? how can you discern whether your grapes be of the *vine of Sibmah*, or of the *vine of Sodom*? whether they be of the *clusters of Eshcol*, or *grapes of gall, whose clusters are bitter*?

But widely different will be the case with you, if ye are wise to *dig the wine-press* in your spiritual vineyard, and to use it according to the blessed purposes for which it was intended. In this case you will at all times be enabled to see and know the true quality of your works, and what is in them. Whilst by *serious examination* you *bring them to the light*, that you may know of a truth whether they are wrought in God or not, God will assuredly manifest to you their inter-

* Isaiah lix. 5.

nal spirit. You will know thus of a certainty what is in them, whether the *lamb* or the *viper*, the *dove* or the *owl*, the angel of heaven, or the spirit of darkness. You will no longer mistake the *sour* grape for the *sweet* grape, the *pure* for the *wild*, but will discern clearly, to your unspeakable joy, what fruit your vine yieldeth.

But this is not all :—by means of the natural wine-press, it has been shewn, there is produced *wine*, which is a substance totally distinct from the grape, and of which it is written, “ that it maketh glad the heart of man.”* This extraordinary effect is not confined to the *natural wine press* ; it belongs, in a super-eminent sense, to the *spiritual wine-press* also. Make but the experiment, and you will be convinced, to your unspeakable joy, of the truth of this observation. Bring all your deeds to the light, by serious exploration and examination, that they *may be made manifest that they are wrought in God*. In this case, you will find a separation will be effected between the mere external work, and the internal spirit or principle from whence it proceeds. This internal spirit or principle, thus discovered, is the *spiritual wine* produced from your grapes, which will indeed *make glad your hearts* ; for who will not be *made glad of heart* by the discovery, that his works are wrought in God ? who will not rejoice to see that his vine thus bringeth forth good grapes ? Thus all your works will bring their blessing with them, because from all your works, thus explored

* Psalm civ. 15.

and examined in the sight of God, you will be enabled to extract from your spiritual drinking and nourishment that heavenly wine, of which it is written, "Ephraim shall be like a mighty one, and their heart shall rejoice *as through wine*: yea, their children shall see and be glad; and their heart shall rejoice in the Lord."* AMEN.

* Zech. x. 7.



ON THE
SPIRITUAL TOWER,

AS DENOTING THE ELEVATION OF TRUTH, AND THE
PROTECTION THENCE DERIVED.

SERMON IX.

Matt. xxi. 33.

Hear another parable : There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

IN the foregoing discourses it has been shewn what is here to be understood by *a certain householder*, what by *the vineyard which he planted*, what by his *hedging it round about*, and what by his *digging a wine-press in it*.

I shall now proceed, as was before intended, to the consideration of the next particular respecting this

vineyard, viz. *the building a tower in it*, and endeavour to lay open the lesson of heavenly wisdom and instruction which this circumstance involves.

It has been already shewn, that the whole of this parable, together with all its parts, hath a spiritual signification, in which it has reference to the Lord and his *church*, both generally and individually. This is the case also in respect to the *tower*, which is here said to be built in the vineyard by the householder. Like the *hedge* and the *wine-press* before spoken of, it hath likewise a spiritual sense and meaning; and unless it be understood accordingly, it is impossible to see any reason why the building thereof should be recorded in this divine and instructive parable.

Much mention is made of *towers* in other parts of the sacred writings, by which it may plainly appear, to every considerate mind, that somewhat spiritual, relating to God and his kingdom, is implied therein.

Thus the psalmist saith, “The Lord is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower;”* where the word *tower* cannot possibly be understood in a natural, but in a spiritual sense. Again, it is written in Isaiah, speaking of the effects of the Lord’s coming, “The day of the Lord shall be upon every high tower:”† where it must be manifest, that by *tower* is meant something spiritual respecting the Lord’s church, inasmuch as no other *tower* could possibly be affected

* Psalm xviii. 2.

† Isaiah ii. 15.

by the Lord's coming. This is expressed still more fully and strongly in Micah, speaking of the blessings which would flow to the church from the Lord's appearing, where it is said, "And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion ;"* where it must be very evident, that by *tower of the flock* somewhat spiritual, relating to the Lord's church and kingdom, must needs be expressed and described. Several other passages might, if needful, be adduced from the sacred scriptures, where the word *tower* is used according to a spiritual sense and signification ; but the above will, I trust, be sufficient to prove, that the word, as applied in the parable under consideration, is to be interpreted spiritually, and not naturally.

What the word *tower* implies in a *spiritual* sense, can only be discovered from considering the use and design of a *natural* tower. This use and design is twofold ; the natural tower is both for *observation* and for *defence* : by its *height* it gives an opportunity of taking a large and comprehensive view of the country around, and thereby of discovering the approach of an enemy ; and by its *strength* it affords protection and security against an enemy when he approaches.

This is precisely the case with the *spiritual tower*, only with this difference, that the spiritual tower is for *spiritual observation* and *defence* ; enabling its inhabitant to take a large and comprehensive view of spiritual regions, and thereby to note the approach of spiritual enemies, and to guard against them.

* Micah iv. 8.

The *spiritual tower* therefore is constructed of all those *interior truths* of the word of God, whereby the soul hath elevation into a higher or interior state of life, and in consequence of such elevation, is enabled both to discover its interior evils, and also to fight against and overcome them.

Permit me to call your most earnest attention to the very important nature, use, and design, of the *spiritual tower* as thus opened and explained.

Perhaps you have never heretofore considered the subject, nor been rightly affected by its extraordinary weight and consequence. Perhaps you have never as yet examined your own minds, with the view of discovering whether the *spiritual tower* be built in you or not. Perhaps you have never seen the danger of *not* building this tower, and how in this case your spiritual vineyard is liable at all times to be laid waste by those interior evils, which can never be detected, and thereby guarded against, but by means of this tower. And lastly, perhaps, you have never been at the pains to examine the nature of those *interior truths* of the word of God, which are necessary for the construction of this *spiritual tower*, and without which it cannot possibly be either constructed, or preserved.

It is high time then assuredly, that you should *now* give a serious attention to these subjects, under an awful apprehension that they are immediately connected with your eternal well-being. For unless this had been the case—unless the building of the *spiritual tower* had been absolutely necessary for your eternal

salvation, there would never have been any mention made of it in the Word of God.

It is impossible, however, that you can form any just idea or apprehension of the *spiritual tower*, unless you are previously acquainted with the nature of those *interior truths of God's Word*, whereof it is constructed. May I bespeak your attention, then, in the first place, to this consideration.

Your own reflection may teach and convince you, if you will make a proper use of it, that man's salvation depends solely on his reception of the truths of God's Word in his heart and life. Where there is no reception of those truths, there can be no salvation, because there are no means, in such case, whereby God can operate salvation, which consists in the removal of evil from man, and the implantation of good. But where there is a due reception of the truths of God's Word, in the heart and life, there salvation is a certain consequence, because there God operates to the extirpation of all evil, and the implantation of all the saving good of his own mercy, love, and truth.

Your own reflection may teach and convince you further, if you be disposed to make use of it, that reception of the truths of God's Word is *twofold*, *external* and *internal*. Some people receive those truths only *externally*, that is, in the *memory*, and not so much in the *life*; whilst others receive them *internally*; that is, *in the life through the memory*.

What I wish now more particularly to observe, and to press upon your observation, is this. Reception of the truths of God merely in the memory, and not in

the life, is of no avail to the building the *spiritual tower*, of consequence is of no avail to salvation. The reason is, because the *spiritual tower* implies an elevation of the intellectual mind, whereby it is enabled to see and discern its interior spiritual evils, and to fight against them; and this elevation cannot have place whilst the truths of God are merely in the memory, and not in the life. For elevation of the intellectual mind, implies conjunction with God, and pre-eminence thereby, over those things which are not of God; and this conjunction and pre-eminence cannot possibly be effected by religious truths, whilst they remain in the memory only, and do not pass thence into the life, or practice.

No *external* reception then of the truths of God is sufficient for building the *spiritual tower* of divine observation and defence. To raise this incomparable and most excellent superstructure, it is needful that truth should be received *internally*. Would you know what is meant by the *internal reception of truth*? It is the truth of God operating in the heart, and producing thence its salutary influences on the life. It is the truth of God, *elevated out of the memory into a higher or inner sphere of the mind*, being received with delight in the affection thereof, and thus tending to raise man out of the love of evil into the love of good, out of earthly vanities into heavenly realities; out of the sinfulness, miseries, and corruption of his own natural life, separate from God, into the sanctities, blessednesses, and purities of that spiritual and eternal life of evangelical love and charity, which is the gift of God

in Jesus Christ, to every one who repenteth and believeth the Gospel.

Behold here the means, and the only means, of building that *spiritual tower*, whence alone cometh protection and salvation to the spiritual vineyard!

Would you then, beloved, find this *tower* built in yourselves, and be made partakers of all its infinite blessings and benefits? Do you wish for such a place of elevation and defence in your own minds, where you may contemplate the great eternal things of God's kingdom, and at the same time discern all the approaches of your spiritual adversaries, and be secured against their assaults? Stir up then your minds, and pray to God to assist you, in the first place, to a diligent and a due consideration of the vast importance of such a spiritual tower. Reflect seriously with yourselves, that your salvation depends upon this building, inasmuch as without it you can neither see the interior evils of your natures, nor fight against them so as to remove them; in which case your vineyard will be continually exposed to depredation—"all they that go by will pluck off your grapes, the wild boar out of the wood will root it up, the wild beasts of the field will devour it."*

When you are thus convinced of the absolute necessity of a *spiritual tower*, for the preservation of your vineyard, then beg of God, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the next place, to give you a just and right apprehension of those *interior truths of his Word*, or,

* Psalm lxxx. 12, 13.

what is the same thing, of that *internal reception of truth*, without which the *spiritual tower* cannot be built. For this purpose, accustom yourselves to reflect frequently and seriously on the utter vanity and unprofitableness of a mere *external reception* of truth in the memory *only*, whilst it doth not enter into the life, that is, into the life's affection. Be often asking yourselves these questions, What can truth profit me, if I do not obey the truth? What can it avail me to *know* the laws and mysteries of heaven, if my life is not affected and changed thereby? How can God save me, if I do not love him; and how can I love him, if I do not endeavour, in all humility and sincerity, to form the whole *internal* spirit and temper of my life, as well as my *external* actions, according to the purity and wisdom of his precepts?

Such examination of yourselves, attended with sincere prayer to the great Redeemer, will soon lead you to an *internal reception* of evangelical truth; and by such reception, the spiritual tower of internal observation and defence will presently be built. Your vineyard will thus abundantly flourish, and its blessed fruits will be preserved from injury. Having your minds elevated into the interior light of heaven, you will be enabled to discern your interior evils, which otherwise you could never know, and by discerning, you will shun and escape them.

Your *tower*, thus, will both discover to you your enemy, and at the same time defend you against his assaults. But this is not all—the higher your *tower* is

built, the nearer you will be to God and heaven ; and the further removed, of consequence, from the vanity and misery of this world. Into this tower you will be enabled to run at all times of alarm and danger, according as it is written, “ The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.”

Thus, by building your *spiritual tower*, you will find the salvation of God ; and with that salvation, all the blessings of the eternal love, righteousness, joy, and peace, will be brought nigh unto you. AMEN.



ON THE

LETTING OUT THE VINEYARD,

OR, THE

DUTIES OF THE SPIRITUAL HUSBANDMAN.

SERMON X.

Matt. xxi. 33.

Hear another parable : There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

HAVING already in the preceding discourses endeavoured to point out the divine wisdom and instruction contained in the former part of this parable, relating to the *vineyard* which was planted, to the *hedge* with which it was encompassed, to the *wine-press* which was dug in it, and to the *tower* which was built therein, we now proceed to consider the further lesson of

truth and weighty admonition, intended for us in these words : *And let it out to husbandmen.*

These words have manifest reference to the charge committed to the *natural husbandman*, who is intrusted, we know, with the care of a natural field or vineyard, that by proper culture he may render it fruitful, which it could not be without such culture.

In allusion to such a charge, our blessed Lord would remind us of our duties as *spiritual husbandmen*, to whom is intrusted the care of a spiritual field or vineyard, that by proper culture it also may be rendered fruitful, which is a thing impossible if such culture be wanting.

No words can sufficiently express the importance of the obligations laid upon us, as called to act in this high and holy character of *spiritual husbandmen*. Every temporal interest, all of mere human greatness, glory, and happiness, disappears, and becomes as nothing, when set in competition with the trust reposed in us by the great *Householder*. If we are unfaithful in this trust, we are undone for ever ; our eternal all is lost, and it had been better for us not to have been born : but if we are faithful, every blessing is then ours ; an eternity of glory will await us, and we shall give praise for ever to that God who hath called us into being.

Such then being the importance of the obligations laid upon us all as *spiritual husbandmen*, I am persuaded you will give me a patient hearing, whilst I endeavour to press upon you the measure of those obligations.

A consideration of the duties of the *natural husbandman* will perhaps enable us, in the easiest and most familiar manner, to comprehend our duties as *spiritual husbandmen*, and therefore God, in his holy word, sends us to the *ploughman* for instruction, and adds this weighty motive to engage our attention thereto, "For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him."*

Let us go forth then to the *field* for information; let us behold there the labours of the *husbandman*, and learn how we also may best cultivate the ground of our hearts, so as to bring forth fruit unto God.

Two things are especially observable respecting the conduct of the *natural husbandman*; first, what he *can* do towards the culture of his land, and secondly, what he *cannot* do.

And, 1st, behold what he *can* do.—You see in his hand a *plough*, with which he is turning up the ground to receive the seed intended to be sown therein. You next observe him *casting in the seed*, and afterwards *harrowing* the earth to cover it in, that so the seed may not perish *because it had no deepness of earth*. Presently when the seed springeth up, you behold him *clearing it of the weeds*, which would otherwise grow up and choak the tender plants. And, lastly, when the full corn is ripened in the ear, you see him *putting in the sickle, binding it up in sheaves, and gathering it into his barn*, that it may be ready for future use.

This then is what the husbandman *can* do towards

* Isaiah xxviii. 23 to 29.

making his ground fruitful. He *can* prepare the earth to receive seed. He *can* cast in the seed when the earth is so prepared. He *can* next harrow the earth so as to cover in the seed. He *can* further, when the seed puts forth the tender blade, pluck up the weeds which might obstruct its growth. And, lastly, he *can* reap his corn, and gather it into his barn.

Let us now see what this natural husbandman *cannot* do in the way of this his husbandry.

And, 1st, it is plain that by all his skill he *cannot* make a single grain of seed wherewith to sow his ground, but must be content to use the seed provided for him. In the next place, he *cannot* prevent storms and tempests, which may endanger his harvest: neither can he cause a fruitful season, and yet without such a season, it is impossible his seed can grow and multiply. He can neither compel the *sun* to shine, nor the *wind* to blow, nor the *rain* to descend; and yet both sun, and wind, and rain, are alike absolutely necessary to the fructification of his ground. Howbeit, although these things are out of his power, he can nevertheless believe that they are in the power of God, and he can cheerfully hope and trust, that whilst he is diligent in doing what he *can* do, those other things, which he *cannot* do, will be ordered in the best manner for his advantage.

Having thus then taken a view of the ability and inability of the *natural husbandman*, let us now turn our eyes to the *spiritual husbandman*, and note the striking marks of similitude between the two characters.

The *spiritual husbandman* hath also his *ability* and *inability*; or, in other words, there are some things which he *can* do, and which are therefore required of him, towards making his ground fruitful in the things of God's kingdom; and there are some things which he *cannot* do, and which are therefore *not* required of him. Let us first see what he *can* do.

Like the *natural husbandman*, he *can prepare his ground*, that is, his heart and affections, by sincere repentance and conversion to God, to receive the *incorruptible seed of the word of God*. He *can* further, if he be so disposed, *take this seed* and *cast it into his ground*; in other words, he can learn the truths of God's word, believe them, and be affected by them. He *can* next *harrow in this seed*, so that it may have a proper depth of earth; or, to speak without a metaphor, he *can meditate* on the holy truths which he hath learnt, and *digest* them in his will and understanding, that so they may enter *deep* into the interiors of his mind. He *can* further, when the seed springs up, *keep it clear from the weeds* which would otherwise choak the tender plants; the reason is plain; he *can* control and subdue his corrupt passions, his earthly and sensual affections, his pride and covetousness, and self-will, which are the great destroyers of the plants of heaven in the human bosom. Finally, when the full corn is ripened in the ear, he *can put in his sickle*, and *bind it up in sheaves*, and *gather it into his barn* for future use; for who cannot see, that by *thankful recollection* and *humble acknowledgment* of the divine graces

and mercies which have been received and rendered fruitful, the pious mind doth as it were *gather* and *store them up* in the inmost recesses of its spirit, where they remain as a reserve for future occasion and use ?

This then is what the *spiritual husbandman can* do towards promoting the fruitfulness of his spiritual ground in the things of heaven. Let us now see what he *cannot* do to secure this blessed end.

And here we shall find his powers and faculties limited, like those of the *natural husbandman*. As for instance ; by all his art and contrivance he *cannot* make a single grain of spiritual seed wherewith to sow his ground, but must be content to receive what is provided for him ; in other words, he cannot produce from his own thought and intelligence a single spiritual truth, but must take this seed of eternal life from the word of God, its only proper source and origin. In the next place he *cannot*, any more than the *natural husbandman*, prevent storms and tempests, viz. the storms and tempests of spiritual trouble, trial, and temptation, which may endanger his growing hopes : neither can he cause a fruitful spiritual season, and yet without such a season, it is as impossible for his spiritual seed to grow and multiply, as it is for the natural seed without a fruitful natural season. The *sun*, the *wind*, the *rain* of the divine benediction, are as needful in one case as in the other, and all that either the spiritual or natural husbandman can do in such case is, cheerfully and patiently to hope and trust, that whilst he is doing his duty and all that he *can* do, a

merciful and gracious God, in his kind providence, will order for his blessing the things which are out of his power, and which he *cannot* do.

Such then is the *ability*, and such the *inability*, of the *spiritual husbandman*, and such therefore is the *ability*, and such the *inability* of us all, inasmuch, as in our true and proper character before God, and as seen of him, we are all of us such *husbandmen*, being all alike called, and all sent into the world for this great end, to cultivate in our hearts and lives the seeds of heaven; being all of us alike in possession of immense and inconceivable faculties for that purpose; and what is no less observable, being all alike unable to accomplish this blessed purpose, and to give full effect to those faculties, without the continual blessing of a most gracious and merciful God.

From this view then of our state and circumstances as *spiritual husbandmen*, it will be easy to discover, if we be so disposed, what is the measure of our several duties, as called to act in that important character.

Some of these duties flow from our *ability*, and some from our *inability*.—Let us first see what those duties are which flow from our *ability*.

These may be all summed up and comprised in this first and fundamental of all duties, viz. *to use faithfully and diligently the powers which God continually giveth us*, and which he doubtless giveth for this single purpose, that we should use them, and that in using them we might find the blessing, and God the glory. For can it be supposed that the righteous God, when he

giveth us the faculties to receive his holy word into our hearts and lives, that it may there grow and bear its heavenly fruit, doth not require the use of those faculties? Have we the power to *read*? Have we the power to *believe*? Have we the power to *digest*? Have we the power to *practise* the precepts of the eternal truth, and thereby become fruitful in the divine life, and be formed in the divine image and likeness; and will not the Father of these powers most reasonably look for the application and increase of them? Let us hear what he himself saith on this subject, “ Son, go work to-day in my vineyard;”* and on another occasion, “ Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.”†

A most poisonous and destructive persuasion is at this day prevalent in the Christian church, which would lead men to believe that things are going well with them in the way of salvation, although they never in any way exert the powers which God giveth them to promote their salvation. How many, for instance, do we see easy and unconcerned about their spiritual state, who yet are living in the daily neglect of the abilities they possess to improve that state! With faculties to read the word of God, they never read it. With faculties to comprehend the eternal truth, they never comprehend it. With faculties to practise the precepts of revealed purity, sanctity, and wisdom, they never practise them. With faculties thus to attain to the

* Matt. xxi. 23.

† Matt. xxv. 27.

pure love of God and of their neighbour, and to live separate from sin, and to be born again and *become the sons of God*, they are strangers to all these blessings, and live at an infinite distance from the privileges which the *Father of mercies* intended them by the gift of those faculties. And yet, notwithstanding all this total annihilation of the powers of salvation intrusted to them, they are blind enough to imagine that they are still in the way to bliss, especially if, in the meanwhile, they can repeat a creed, or utter the sound of a prayer, or plead, in behalf of their negligence, the blood and the merits of the Redeemer. But can any imagination be more delusive? Can any be more groundless? For what is salvation, and what is eternal happiness, but an effect of our reception and cultivation of the Word of God in our hearts and lives? Can man be saved and made happy without the Word of God? And can the Word of God save him and make him happy, unless it be implanted and become fruitful in him? And can it be implanted and become fruitful in him, without some exertion on his part, of the ability which God giveth him for that purpose? Let the lot of that slothful servant, who *hid his Lord's pound in a napkin*, determine these questions.

Suffer me, then, to press earnestly upon your attention and practice, this first and principal duty of *spiritual husbandry*, viz. to exert faithfully and diligently the spiritual powers which you have received, and receive continually from the great Lord *of the harvest*. Think, what will this Lord say, when he comes and

finds that you have been “standing in the market-place all the day idle ; that, instead of entering into the vineyard, and sowing heavenly seed, and watching its growth and fruitfulness in your minds, you have only been *sowing to the flesh*, amongst the cares, and pleasures, and vanities of a perishing world. Will not he expostulate, and expostulate justly, with every such careless husbandman, and say, *How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy husbandry*, and of the things committed to thy charge. I gave thee my living word for thy salvation ; but how is it that thou hast rejected it, or, what is the same thing, hast neglected to read and to profit by it ? I gave thee also the power and faculty whereby thou mightest receive and understand my word, mightest cherish it in thy heart, and thereby render it fruitful in thy life. How then has it come to pass, that thou hast no fruit to shew of these my heavenly gifts ; but hast *hid the talent*, which I committed to thee, *in the earth* ? What strange infatuation can have blinded thine eyes, that thou shouldest not see, that to reject my gifts and the use of them, is to reject *me* and my *salvation* ? “Cast ye, therefore, the unprofitable servant into outer darkness.”

But, lastly, there are other duties required of the spiritual husbandman, which flow from his *inability*.

We have already seen in what this *inability* of the spiritual husbandman consists, viz. that when he hath done all in his power towards making his vineyard fruitful, he must still confess that the seed is not *his*, and that he *cannot* preserve it from storms and tem-

pests, and make it fruitful, *of himself*; but that both the seed, the preservation, and the fruitfulness, are from another, viz. from God, *and the continual dew of his blessing*.

But what is the language of this *inability*, and what doth it teach us as spiritual husbandmen? Surely this lesson of unutterable wisdom; *to be humble, and put our trust in God, and to acknowledge that he is the true Husbandman,* and that we are only husbandmen under and from him*. Surely the consideration, therefore, of what we *cannot* do, is alike instructive and edifying as the consideration of what we *can* do. For whilst we learn, from what we *can* do, to estimate and exert aright the spiritual powers which we have received, we learn, from what we *cannot* do, to adore and rely upon the omnipotence of God, and thereby unite our powers with that omnipotence. Whilst our *ability* teaches us the duty of *exertion*, our *inability*, with equal energy, presses the no less profitable duty of *submission*. Whilst the view of our strength lets us see and feel a sort of *independence* in ourselves, the view of our *weakness* makes us see and feel our continual *dependence* upon God. In short, whilst, from what we *can* do, we are instructed to use our best endeavours, *as of ourselves*, to make our spiritual vineyards fruitful; from what we *cannot* do, we are further instructed, that “we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but that our sufficiency is

* See John xv. 1.

from God ; and that therefore our wisest rule of acting is, whilst we act *as of ourselves*, to act *in entire reliance upon and from Him* who hath said, “Without me ye can do nothing.” Thus even our *infirmities* were intended to be our *instructors* ; and our very *wants*, and *dangers*, and *troubles*, with an invincible eloquence, enforce upon us experimentally the divine precept, “Put thou thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good : commit thy way unto the Lord, and he will bring it to pass.”*

Let us then study diligently, and practise faithfully, as wise husbandmen, the *double* lesson taught us by the powers we possess, and by the powers we want : and, combining the united instruction resulting from this double lesson, let us collect thence, for our daily direction, the following summary of all Christian duty, which it teaches ; viz. that if we wish to become faithful husbandmen in our Lord’s vineyard ; if we wish his holy word to grow and multiply in our bosoms, and bring forth, *after its kind*, the heavenly fruit of righteousness, wisdom, and peace ; if we wish thus to recover in ourselves the divine image and likeness, and attain unto all that blessedness of true religion, which Jesus Christ intended for us, when he prayed “that they all may be one, as thou, *Father*, art in me, and I in thee, that they all may be one in us ;”† we must then *co-operate* with our God towards the accom-

* Psalm xxxvii. 3. 5.

† John xvii. 21.

plishment of these blessed ends. For this purpose, we must use *freely* the powers which he has given us, *as if they were our own*; but then we must use them at the same time as *his*, and in *dependence upon him*: we must be *active* in fulfilling the evangelical duties of repentance, of self-examination, of watchfulness, and of sincere obedience, as if these duties depended entirely upon ourselves; but then we must guard against the vain confidence of our *own* activity, by ascribing it unto God.

Thus we must learn to unite our *derived* powers with their *primitive* powers, nature with grace, body with spirit, and thereby ourselves with Jesus Christ; not according to the mistaken ideas of a false *quietism*, but in the exertion of evangelical virtue; not according to the wildness of a *blind enthusiasm*, but in the calm sobriety of an *enlightened wisdom*. We must therefore be zealous for our God and for eternal life; but we must take heed that our zeal be *of* God, as well as *for* him: we must watch alike against the extremes of that self-exertion which would preclude *humility*, and of that humility which would induce *supineness*. In our low estate, we must not forget that "charity hopeth all things; but in hoping all things, we must not suffer *hope* to slumber in *carelessness*"; as, on the other hand, in our high estate, when hope is realized in possession, we must be alike upon our guard against that *presumption*, which too often overtakes us when we fancy things are at the best with us. In short, whilst we acknowledge that we *can do nothing without* Jesus Christ, we

must be careful of abusing this acknowledgment to our destruction, by doing nothing *with* him: and whilst we are diligent to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling,” as of ourselves, we must believe, with the apostle, that “it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”* AMEN.

* Phil. ii. 12, 13.

ON THE
HOUSEHOLDER

GOING INTO A FAR COUNTRY,

OR THE TRUE CAUSE OF THE APPARENT DISTANCE AND
NEARNESS OF GOD.

SERMON XI.

Matt. xxi. 33.

Hear another parable: There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

HAVING already endeavoured to explain and enforce the lessons of heavenly instruction, contained in the former part of these words, as they relate to a *certain householder*, to the *vineyard* which he *planted*, to the *hedge* with which he encompassed it, to the *wine-press* which he *digged* in it, to the *tower* which

he *built* in it, and to the *husbandmen* to whom he *let it out*; I shall now proceed to a consideration of the last particular, viz. he *went into a far country*.

These words, it is plain, are spoken of the *householder*; and inasmuch as by the *householder*, according to what was shewn in a former discourse, is represented and signified the Lord God the Saviour, as head and ruler of the church; therefore in their spiritual sense and application they have relation to this *divine householder*, this planter and supporter of the true spiritual vineyard.

But it will be asked, How can it be said of God with any degree of truth or propriety, that he *went into a far country*? Is not God always and every where *present*? Is it possible for him to remove *afar off* from any part of his creation? Is he not *alike* near unto all men, and all things, at all times? And must not sudden destruction of necessity come both upon men and things, if God was to be *separated* or *removed* from them? In what sense then can it be said of the omnipresent God, that he *went into a far country*?

I shall endeavour to give these questions such an answer as their great importance demands; and since the answer may tend in some measure to open the depths of the divine wisdom contained in the words under consideration, may I bespeak your most serious attention to a subject in which the true knowledge of God and of yourselves is so intimately involved.—
And, **Is**. We find in many passages of the sacred writings, that *nearness* and *distance* are applied to God,

and to the things of God; or, in other words, that God, and the things of God, are represented sometimes as *nigh at hand*, and at other times as *afar off*.

Thus it is written in the book of the Psalms, “The Lord is *nigh unto* them that are of a broken heart;”* and in another place, “The Lord is *nigh unto* all them that call upon him.”†

Again it is said in the same book, “Why art thou *so far* from helping me?”‡ and in another place, “O Lord, be not *far from me*;”§ and in the prophet Jeremiah, “Am I a God *at hand*, and not a God *afar off*?”||

It is not however to be supposed, from this mode of expression, that *distance*, according to the common or literal sense of the word, is at all applicable to God, or to the things of God.

For let a man travel with his body ever so far, in any direction whatsoever, in the regions of space, he will not be a jot nearer or further off from God, at the end of his journey, in respect to distance of space, than he was when he first set out.

When therefore the sacred scriptures speak of God as *afar off*, it is to be understood that they speak only according to appearance, or because it so appears unto man, not because God in reality is at any time *afar off*.

* Psalm xxxiv. 13.

† Psalm cxlv. 13.

‡ Psalm xxii. 1.

§ Psalm xxii. 11.

|| Jer. xxiii. 23.

This mode of expressing things *according to appearance*, is common in the sacred writings, and is frequently applied in other cases in respect to God.

Thus God is often said to be *angry* and *wrathful* against the wicked; not that he is really *angry* and *wrathful*, (for it is impossible that such affections can have any place in a holy God,) but because to the wicked he *appears angry* and *wrathful*, in consequence of the opposition and contrariety which must ever of necessity subsist between a sinful creature, and the pure and holy Creator.

Would you know then the true ground and reason why God is spoken of in the sacred scriptures in respect to *distance* and *nearness*, as of space and place, and is represented sometimes as being *afar off*, and at other times as being *near*? It is owing entirely to the *appearance* thereof in respect to man, according to which appearance God is ever seen by the good as a *near* and *present* God, and by the wicked as a *distant* and *absent* God.

The *real* truth is, that, in regard to *distance of place* or *space*, God, his *kingdom*, and the things thereof, are alike *near unto*, and *present with* all men, at all times, in all places, and in every state of their lives. The most wicked and careless sinner, in this sense, has God and heaven as *near unto him*, and as *present with him*, as the most righteous and watchful saint. No human heart ever was, is, or can be, separated from God by any thing like *distance of space*. The omnipresent Creator is, and ever must be, *most near unto*

all, because he is *in all*, and the *life of all*, and therefore it is as impossible for any human spirit to be removed from him, as to space or place, as it is impossible it should be removed from its own life.

It was according to this idea, that our blessed Lord, when he appointed the seventy disciples to preach the *Gospel*, strictly charged them to declare even to those who should reject their divine mission, “Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God *is come nigh unto you.*”*

But though God, his kingdom, and the things thereof, are alike near unto the righteous and unto the wicked, unto *him that feareth God, and unto him that feareth him not*, yet herein a mighty difference is to be observed.

The righteous, (by whom are to be understood the regenerate) see and feel in themselves this *nearness* of God and of the things of his kingdom. They are made sensible in their own hearts, and in their own understandings, of the *divine presence* with them, and know by happy experience that *the kingdom of God is nigh unto them*. They no longer, therefore, look at heaven, and at the Lord of heaven, as at *distant* objects, as at things *absent* and *afar off*; but they look at them as at objects which are of all others *most near to* and *present* with them, because intimately connected and conjoined with the very essence of their life.

But the contrary is true of the wicked, that is, of

* Luke x. 11

the unregenerate. Notwithstanding the *real nearness* of God and of the things of his kingdom to them, yet they still view them as at an *immense distance*, and they cannot help so viewing them whilst they continue wicked or unregenerate. Though they are told ever so often that *the kingdom of God is nigh unto them*, yet they will not believe it. Though they hear of an eternity, of an eternal world, and of eternal beings therein, yet they fancy all these things *most remote and absent*, and treat them accordingly. The *real presence* of God therefore is unseen and unknown to them, not because he is not as near to them as he is to the righteous, but because their minds are not in the same state to see and perceive his nearness.

For if you inquire the reason why the same omnipresent God, and the same eternal kingdom of his heaven, are thus seen differently by different persons, appearing to some *most near*, and to some *most distant*, you cannot possibly find any other reason than this, that the hearts and affections of some are turned *from* themselves and the world *towards* God, whereas the hearts and affections of others are turned *from* God *towards* themselves and the world; and all spiritual nearness or distance depends entirely on the state of the heart and affections.

That this is the case—that a change in the state of the heart and affections causes different apprehensions of God and the things of eternity, you may be convinced by every day's experience.

Take, for instance, a carnal and thoughtless man,

who is in the full enjoyment of bodily health and animal spirits, and whose affections all centre in the riches and pleasures of this world and the flesh ; and talk to such a man of the *nearness* of God and eternity, and he will most probably make a mock of all your information, at least he will not feel it to be true.

But suppose this same man to be laid in a bed of sickness, or to be pressed down by any heavy affliction ;—suppose the vigour of his carnal and worldly enjoyments to be for a while suspended ; and that in this state you speak to him of God and heaven ;—he will now most probably feel the force of all that you tell him,—he will perceive and confess the real *nearness* of those things *now* which he had *heretofore* viewed as *afar off*,—he will be surprised that he had not seen them so before, and will be exceedingly amazed to think that the perishable objects of this world and the flesh should be possessed of such a delusive and enchanting power, to hide from the eyes of a reasonable being the awful and near realities of an eternal world.

And what shall we say is the reason why this sick and afflicted man sees God and his kingdom *nearer* in his affliction, and on his bed of sickness, than he saw them in his prosperity, and in the pride and vigour of his health ? We must be forced to confess it can be owing to no other cause than this, that the state of his heart and affections was changed by his sickness and affliction, and that this change *alone* made the difference of his views : God and *heaven* were certainly as

near to him in the former days of his health and prosperity, as in the latter days of his malady and trouble ; but he did not at that time see and perceive their nearness :—the reason was, because his heart and affections were then turned from God and heaven, to delight more in other objects ; and the spirit of man can only see that object in which it delights.

Behold here then, beloved, the true and eternal cause of that *distance*, which in the sacred Scriptures is so frequently ascribed to God ! Behold also the lesson of deep and weighty instruction, contained in the words of my text, in regard to the great householder, where it is said, that “ he went into a far country ! ”

To go *into a far country*, when spoken of God, it has been already shewn, must relate to the state of man’s affections, in which God *appears* to him as *afar off*. This is the case with every man in his natural or unregenerate state, which is the state of the *husbandmen* here described under the *first planting* of the spiritual vineyard. In this state, the affections are merely natural, worldly, and carnal ; the things of God and of his kingdom are apprehended very darkly and imperfectly ; the riches, honours, and glories of this world *affect much*, and therefore appear to be very *near* and *present* ; whereas the riches, honours, and glories of the eternal world *affect but little*, and therefore appear to be *distant* and *afar off*.

But doth the great *householder* always thus dwell in a *far country* ? Do the spiritual *husbandmen* always thus behold him as *afar off*, and perceive him as a *dis-*

tant and *absent* God, and his kingdom as a distant and absent kingdom? Doubtless not. It is the voice of religion; it is the voice of God himself—"The Lord is *nigh* unto them that are of a *broken* heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."* And again, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will *come* unto him, and *make our abode* with him."† And again, "Draw *nigh* unto God, and he will *draw nigh* unto you."‡

Whilst man, indeed, hath his *heart unbroken*, living only to himself and to the world, unconverted to God, and unregenerate, he must of necessity see heaven and the great *householder* as at a distance. But let this state now be reversed; let his heart be broken by affliction and godly sorrow; let us suppose him a sincere penitent at the throne of mercy, awakened to a sense and perception of his eternal concerns, supplicating pardon for sin, and grace to live a new life; let us suppose a removal hereby of his evil affections, and that the good affections of heavenly love and wisdom are implanted, by an earnest seeking of these eternal riches; let us suppose that the powers of worldly and selfish love are hereby weakened, and that he begins to be made sensible of the superior power and life of an omnipotent Redeemer; let us suppose that he thus begins to walk steadfastly and watchfully in the ways of regeneration, looking for the appearing of God and

* Psalm xxxiv. 18.

† John xiv. 23.

‡ James iv. 8.

his kingdom in his own mind, according to the Scriptures ;—how will he now see that *near*, which he had *before* seen only *afar off* ! How will God, heaven, and eternity, appear *present* and *at hand*, which had before seemed absent and at an immense distance from his view !

Would you then, beloved, attain unto this extraordinary blessedness and most high privilege, for which you were created, and which is your peculiar birth-right as reasonable creatures, even the privilege of seeing the face of your God, and of beholding him ever *nigh unto*, and *present with you*, with all the riches of his kingdom ? Labour then to come into a spirit of true repentance, and, by repentance, into regeneration of heart and of life. Remember, that evil alone, that is, an evil and unrighteous love, separates God from you, according as it is written, “Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you.”* Remember further, that the face of God can never be seen but in and by the good of his own love, and the truth of his own wisdom ; just as you can never see the face of the sun but in and by the light of the sun. Cherish, then, in your bosoms, this heavenly good and truth ;—let them prevail and have dominion over all the false and apparent goods of the world and the flesh, with their delusive persuasions. Look continually in humility, faith, and obedience, unto the manifested God, the

* Isaiah lix. 2.

Lord Jesus Christ, from whom alone all this saving good and truth come. You will then soon behold him *present* with and *nigh unto you*. Every step you thus take in the regeneration, will bring you nearer to God and heaven : every separation from evil will make the face of the Almighty shine brighter upon you : you will thus no longer see him as *at a distance*, and under the dark veil and covering of an earthly nature ; but you will see him as a God *at hand*, in the clear brightness of his majesty ; and in you will be fulfilled the blessed prophecy, “ He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations ; and it shall be said, Lo, this is our God ; we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord ; we have waited for him ; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”*
AMEN.

* Isaiah xxv. 7. 9.

ON THE
SPIRITUAL FRUIT,
WHICH
THE VINEYARD PRODUCES.

SERMON XII.

Matt. xxi. 34.

And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

WE have already considered the lessons of divine instruction, contained and conveyed to us, in the former part of this parable, where it is written, "There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

May I now bespeak your serious attention to the further lessons of instruction and edification contained and conveyed to us in the subsequent words of the parable, “ And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.”

There are three several particulars in these words, which demand particular consideration.

1. The *fruits* of the vineyard.

2. The *time of the fruits drawing near*.

3. The *servants* of the householder, who were sent, that they might *receive the fruits of it*.

I shall endeavour to explain and enforce each of these particulars in such a manner, as may best conduce to open to our understandings the treasures of that eternal and inexhaustible wisdom, with which this, and all other parts of the sacred scriptures are so abundantly stored for our use.

And, 1st, respecting *the fruits* of the vineyard.

There is much mention made of these *fruits* in the sacred writings, and it is again and again declared, that every man's eternal state will depend altogether upon the *fruits*, which his vineyard yieldeth.

If there be *no fruits*, there can be no blessedness in eternity; if the *fruits* be *few* or *small*, the blessedness in eternity will be proportionably diminished; if the *fruits* be abundant and excellent, so will the blessedness be in that life which shall never have an end.

Thus it is written in the prophet, “ They shall eat

the fruit of their doings,"* by which is signified, that every man appropriates to himself a life agreeable to his *fruits*. And again, "Ye shall know them by their fruits;"† plainly declaring, that every man is what his *fruits* are, and that the man and his *fruits* are the same thing. And again, "Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance,"‡ (or, as it may more properly be rendered, *worthy fruits of repentance*;) whereby is manifestly intimated, that the sincerity, and consequently the efficacy of *repentance* will depend on its *fruits*.

For the same reason the *fig-tree* in the gospel was cursed, because it bare no *fruit*, having *nothing but leaves*, to denote the sinful and miserable state of those human minds, which are barren of true spiritual *fruit*, and have nothing to shew but mere external appearances and semblances thereof.

Such, then, being the case in regard to *fruits*, it is an awful question, which every sincere Christian will seriously ponder, and to which he will require a satisfactory answer in his own mind, What is the *fruit* of the true spiritual vineyard? and doth my vineyard bear such *fruit*?

He will be exceedingly afraid of making any, even the smallest mistake in this important inquiry. He will recollect that his salvation depends upon it; that his eternal well-being is connected with it. He will

* Isaiah iii 10.

† Matt. vii. 16.

‡ Matt. iii.

therefore never rest till he hath acquired full and complete satisfaction, in his own mind, on a subject which of all others doth most nearly concern him.

But what will be the result of this inquiry? What will he discover to be the nature and kind of that genuine *fruit* of the vineyard, which is salvation and eternal life? Surely he will recollect the words of Jesus Christ on the interesting subject, "He that abideth in ME, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit;"* and in these words he will find deliverance from error and delusion, and at the same time the fullest satisfaction of mind arising from the brightness of the light of eternal truth.

By these divine words he will be taught, that the genuine *fruit* of the vineyard, or, of the true church, is an effect of its *abiding* in Jesus Christ, and of having Jesus Christ abide in it. He will see, therefore, with the greatest clearness of conviction, that no man can bear fruit of himself; consequently that all fruit is produced by and from the great redeeming God, whilst man looks unto and abides in HIM as the *true vine*, of which he himself is but a branch.

But what is the *fruit* which the *true vine* yieldeth? What is the genuine effect of man's abiding in Jesus Christ, and of having Jesus Christ abide in him?

Let us hear the inspired apostle on this subject, where he saith, "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy,

* John xv. 5

peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”*

Behold here, beloved, the *fruits* of the true vineyard, *what* they are, and *whence* they are. Contemplate them in their *origin*, and contemplate them in their *end*, that so ye may become of the happy number of those who *bring forth these fruits to perfection*.

In their *origin* these fruits are Jesus Christ himself, because in their *origin* they partake of his spirit and of his life. From this origin they descend into the members of the true church, as the juices of the vine into the branches, and there they manifest themselves under various *forms* and *effects*, according to the degree of life into which they enter.

Their first descent is into the human *will*, and here they produce, as the apostle expresseth it, *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness*. Before these heavenly fruits appear, the human will is filled merely with the love of itself and of this world, together with all the violence, restlessness, hatred, and animosity, which ever attend those evil loves. But on the manifestation and growth of the heavenly fruits, an entire change taketh place, and man is made sensible of a pure love towards God and his neighbour, together with the peaceable and blessed effects of that love.

Their next descent is into the human *understanding*, and here they produce what the apostle calleth *faith*, by which we are to understand all heavenly knowledge, intelligence, and wisdom, derived from and

* Gal. v. 22, 23.

connected with the love of God, and of our neighbour. The human understanding, till these heavenly fruits appear, is full of error and delusion, arising from the false principles which take their birth from, and are ever connected with an evil love; but on the descent of the heavenly fruits, the eternal truth manifests the splendour and beauty of her divine countenance, and at her arising, like that of the morning sun, all the mists and clouds of error and delusion are suddenly dissipated.

But the fruits of the *true vine* are not confined only to man's *will and understanding*. They make yet a further descent, and appear under another form, whilst they enter into, and manifest themselves in man's outward life, that is, in his *words and works*.

In this descent, or in this degree of man's life, the fruits of the true vine discover themselves in all sincerity of speech, and all uprightness and usefulness of conduct and conversation. The member of Jesus Christ must needs *speak and act* from Jesus Christ, because he must needs speak and act from the divine love and wisdom manifesting their heavenly fruits in his will and in his understanding. He finds it impossible therefore either to be vain or to be insincere in his words and actions. He leaves to the children of this world to be cunning and artful, to be deceitful and temporizing, to be hypocritical and unjust in their language and in their dealings; whilst he himself, recollecting in *whom* he abides, and *who* abides in him, must needs in all his words and in all his works be ac-

tuated by the eternal spirit of that justice and judgment which are from God, and which are God, and thus bring forth those fruits of use and benefit to his fellow-creatures, in the faithful discharge of all the duties of his station, whatsoever it be, of which fruits the Son of God saith, "Herein is my *Father* glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."*

Behold here then, beloved, the genuine nature and kind of the *fruits* of the true vineyard! They descend from Jesus Christ, and they are Jesus Christ, because they are so much of *his* life and spirit manifested and brought forth in all such pure and obedient minds as *abide in him, and have him abiding in them.*

Would you know then whether you are bringing forth these fruits of the true vineyard? Would you know whether you are living *branches* thus of the true vine, or, on the contrary, are the "branches cast forth and withered, which men gather, and cast into the fire, and they are burned?"† Examine yourselves well then by this simple but most sure and certain rule, *Do you abide in Jesus Christ, and doth he abide in you?* Do you labour that the spirit and life of this great God and Redeemer may be made manifest in you? Are you convinced that merely of yourselves you cannot bring forth any *saving fruits*, and that all which you call your *own virtue*, your *own merit*, your *own wisdom*, and your *own good works*, are only so far

* John xv. 8.

† John xv. 6.

good, as they partake of the *virtue*, the *merit*, the *wisdom*, and *work* of the incarnate God? Is it thus become your religion? Is it become the one ruling end and desire of your lives, to become humble and obedient before Jesus Christ, that so, working together with him in every principle of spirit, mind, and body, you may *bring forth fruits* to his glory, and to your own eternal peace?

Such examination will tend to deliver you from abundance of error and of folly, and at the same time to establish your minds in all the power and comfort of the eternal truth. Convinced of the great danger of being *barren* and *unprofitable* branches of the true vine, you will see the necessity of looking earnestly unto the Redeemer, and of labouring together with him, to become *fruitful* in every good thought, word, and work. Convinced of the equal danger of not distinguishing between *apparent* and *genuine fruits*, between those which are merely from yourselves, and those which are the effect of your abiding in Jesus Christ, you will no longer deceive yourselves with *appearances of virtue*, those specious semblances of good, which, like *painted fruits*, have nothing of fruit belonging to them but the outward show, being destitute of the internal juices and flavour thereof. You will see, that nothing can stand you in any stead, but *the fruit of God*, that is, his *love* and *wisdom* ruling in and becoming your love and wisdom; and that every thing in you, and every thing which proceeds from

you, if it is not from God, and wrought in God, must needs perish, and end in your confusion.

You will not, however, on this account, become like stocks and statues, doing nothing of yourselves, and expecting that God, without your exertion, should produce fruit in you and by you. No; you will perceive this to be the extremity of delusion; you will therefore exert yourselves; you will love what is good, you will think what is good, you will do what is good, freely, as of yourselves; but then you will believe that the power to do so is continually from God, and is God's; and therefore, whilst you act of yourselves, you will act with and from God. Thus all your exertions, all your labours, all your works, will tend to bring you nearer to God, and to join you closer with *him*. All your *fruits* you will acknowledge to be *his fruits*, and not your own: and by this acknowledgment, all your fruits will become blessing, and life, and peace, and salvation to you, because they will fill you more and more with the fulness of *Him*, who is the *all* of blessing, the *all* of life, the *all* of peace, and the *all* of salvation to his church, and to every member thereof. AMEN.



ON THE
TIME OF THE FRUIT,
OR
SPIRITUAL SEASONS.

SERMON XIII.

Matt. xxi. 34.

And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

HAVING already, in the preceding discourse, endeavoured to shew what we are here to understand by *the fruit* of the spiritual vineyard, I shall now proceed to a consideration of the next particular herein presented to our attention, viz. *the time of the fruit drawing near.*

Every one knows, that the natural vineyard hath its distinct *times* or *seasons*, through which it is necessary to pass, before its *fruit* can be formed and fully ripened for the husbandman's use.

Thus there is the *time* or *season* of *planting*; there is also the *time* or *season* for *blossoming*; there is next the *time* or *season* for the *first forming* of *fruit*; and lastly, there is the *time* or *season* in which the *fruit* is *fully ripened*, and *gathered* for use.

These *times* or *seasons*, in regard to the natural vineyard, are distinguished by the several names of the portions of the year, called *spring*, *summer*, and *autumn*.

Every one further knows, or may know, that these *times* or *seasons* are *perfectly distinct the one from the other*, both in their *progress* and in their *effect*. Thus the *time* or *season* for the vineyard's *blossoming*, is perfectly distinct from that in which the *fruit* is *formed*; as this again is distinct from the *season* in which the *fruit* *fully ripens*: and thus also the *blossoming*, the *formation of the fruit*, and its *ripening*, are perfectly distinct effects and operations, the one from the other.

Every one, lastly, knows, or may know, concerning the natural vineyard, that the *latter* *time* or *season* can never be arrived at, without passing through the *former*. Thus it is impossible that any *fruit* should be *formed*, until the vine hath first *yielded its blossoms*; as again it is impossible that the *fruit* should be *ripened* and *gathered*, until it be first *formed*.

But though all this be known in regard to the *natural vineyard*, yet it is to be feared, it is in general little known, that the same is true also in regard to the *spiritual vineyard*; and that *this* vineyard likewise hath its several particular *times* or *seasons*, through which it

must necessarily pass, before it can produce fruit fit for the husbandman's use.

Thus, as the natural vineyard hath its *winter*, its *spring*, its *summer*, and its *autumn*, so hath also the *spiritual vineyard*; and as the natural vineyard is first *planted*, then *blossoms*, next *forms its fruits*, and lastly *fully ripens them*, the same distinct processes have place likewise in the spiritual vineyard.

Possibly, beloved, you have never heretofore considered this subject with that attention which it deserves. Possibly you are surprised to hear of these *spiritual times* or *seasons*, and wonder that such things should be, or, if they are, that you have not noted them.

Permit me, then, at this time, to call your observation more particularly to this subject, as to a matter of the utmost concern to your spiritual and eternal interests. For it is not, believe me, a point of mere speculation and curious inquiry; it is not one of those indifferent or uninteresting questions, which are calculated rather to amuse than to edify: but it is a subject connected closely with your eternal well-being; it is incorporated with your spiritual life; and therefore you cannot be in ignorance about it; but you must be in ignorance about yourselves, and about what is perpetually passing in yourselves, and thus be proportionably lacking in that knowledge which is able to make you *wise unto salvation*.

You will find no sort of difficulty in apprehending what is meant by *spiritual seasons*, provided you are in

a disposition to allow and believe what the sacred scriptures so abundantly teach you, viz. that the Lord Jesus Christ, as *the sun of righteousness* in the spiritual or eternal world, shineth upon all human minds, and imparteth to them his blessed heat and light, which are his divine love and wisdom, just as the natural sun of this world shineth upon all parts of the habitable globe, and imparteth to them its natural heat and light.

It is a great natural truth, well known to philosophers, that the varieties in the *natural seasons* are owing solely to this one circumstance, viz. that the earth changeth its aspect in regard to the sun, so as not always to receive the sun's rays in the same degree of fulness and of power.

Thus, when the earth is in such an aspect as to receive the sun's light *alone*, without its heat, it is then the season which we call *winter*; in which season, we know, nothing grows or vegetates, but all temporal nature is in an apparent state of torpidness and of death.

Again, when the earth is in such an aspect in regard to the sun, as to receive a portion of its heat, *together* with the light, it is then the season which we call *spring*; and in this season, we know, the plants of the earth begin to spring forth and blossom, and all nature assumes a new face of cheerfulness and of joy.

So again, when the earth still further changeth its aspect, so as to receive a further increase of the sun's heat, it is then the season which we call *summer*; and in this season, we know, the plants of the earth begin

to bear their fruits, and what was before *blossom*, now changeth its appearance and form, and is presented to the eye of the beholder under an altogether new state of being.

Lastly, when the aspect of the earth is again changed in regard to the sun, so as to admit of a more equal temperature of heat, it is then the season which we call *autumn*; and in this season, we know, the fruits of the earth are brought to their full perfection of excellence for the use of man.

Thus it is, beloved, that the God of nature instructeth us by the natural seasons of this world, concerning the laws of those spiritual and eternal seasons, which have their origin in himself, and which constitute the various states and processes of the regenerate life in the faithful here on earth.

For suppose now, that instead of the natural sun of this world, we think of the spiritual *sun of righteousness* in the eternal world; and instead of the heat and light proceeding from the natural sun, we think of the heat and light, which is the divine love and wisdom, proceeding from the spiritual sun; and instead of the earth and its various productions, that we think of human minds with the infinite varieties of affections and thoughts therein contained—who cannot see, in this case, that similar changes must needs exist and have place, according to the different aspects of each mind in regard to the spiritual sun, and that these changes may with the utmost propriety be called *spiritual seasons*?

As for example, and to apply the case to ourselves—

Are any of our minds in that aspect in regard to the sun of righteousness in the eternal world, as to receive the beams of his light *only*, without his heat, or in other words, to be *enlightened* with the knowledge of him in our understandings, without being *enlivened* with the love of him in our wills—who cannot see, that this is a spiritual state or season, which may with the greatest propriety be called *spiritual winter*, inasmuch as all things in our minds, during this unhappy state, must needs be torpid and dead, having nothing of the life of heaven in them?

Again—Have any of our minds been convinced of the danger of resting in this barren and unprofitable state of a *mere knowledge* of holy things, without a corresponding life and love? And have we in consequence of this conviction laboured, by sincere repentance before God, to join charity to our faith, and obedience to our persuasions? Doth the truth of God begin thus to be united with the pure affection thereof, and to be received by us with its holy and heavenly delights? Who cannot see, that this state or season of our minds may most properly be called *spiritual spring*, that blessed season in which all things begin to *blossom* forth their various beauties, and to shew the signs of a vigorous and internal life operating within them?

Again—Is our love for the things of God and his kingdom become still stronger and more elevated? Do we feel, by virtue of a deeper repentance, and a more internal purification of heart, that the rays of the heavenly and eternal sun shine upon us with a fuller radi-

ance, and a more quickening warmth? In other words, are our wills inflamed with the heat of the divine goodness, which we love to the Lord and to each other, as our understandings are enlightened with the light of the divine truth? and through their *conjoined* influences do we begin to bring forth the fruit of good works in our several stations and callings? By what fitter name shall we call this blessed and fruitful season of mind, than by that of *spiritual summer*, in which the blossom of mere intellectual knowledge begins to disappear, and to give place to the more solid and profitable fruit of heavenly righteousness, love, and peace, manifesting itself in all the good works of an holy and useful life?

Lastly—Have we continued for some time under the kindly rays of this *summer sun*? Are we arrived, through further gradual advancement in the heavenly life of regeneration, at that equal temperament of spiritual influences, in which all the faculties of the mind are restored to and preserved in their due and proportionate vigour and exercise? In other words, are our wills, our understandings, and our works, all conjointly brought under the regulations of an heavenly love and life, so as to partake of, and to bring forth respectively their united fruits in a full and perfect ripeness? Who cannot see, that this last and crowning season is that *spiritual autumn* of the godly and regenerate mind, in which the effects of the preceding seasons are all terminated and fulfilled in their lasting usefulness, and *fruit is thus brought forth to perfection?*

Behold here then, beloved, a view of those *spiritual seasons*, answering to the *natural* ones, which the words of my text have led me to present to your serious attention and consideration.

Permit me now, by way of conclusion, to ask you a few questions naturally flowing from the subject under consideration.—In which of these spiritual seasons, think you, are your own minds revolving? What is your particular *aspect* in regard to the sun of heaven? Is it still the gloom and cold of *winter* with you; or do you begin to be made sensible of the joys and warmth of *spring*, of *summer*, of *autumn*? In other words, are you resting still in a mere speculative faith, which hath no influence upon your affections, your thoughts, and works, to turn them unto God; or are you begun to labour in sincere repentance to *join to your faith* heavenly *virtue*, and by that conjunction to experience a progressive advancement, through the several seasons of the spiritual life, till you arrive at the perfect fruitfulness? One or other of the above seasons must of necessity be to each of you your *peculiar* or *ruling* season, and it certainly is of importance for you to know which it is.

May then these questions lead you to a serious examination of the state of your own hearts in regard to the holy God and his eternal kingdom! May they lead you to look up to, and to be affected by that spiritual and eternal *sun*, whose blessed rays are for ever shining upon you, whether you think of it or not! May they lead you to see the danger of resting in any spi-

ritual season, short of that concluding and crowning season, in which your fruit may be fully ripened for the great *Householder's* use! May they lead you, if it be yet *winter* with you, to look for the joy of the heavenly *spring*; if it be *spring* with you, to advance onwards towards the fuller joys and delights of the heavenly *summer*; if it be summer, not yet to stand still, but to press forwards to the full and complete fruitfulness of the heavenly *autumn*! May you thus, advancing in the knowledge and love of things eternal, be led to rise above and out of the perishable times and seasons of this world, that so you may be found revolving in those eternal seasons, which have their origin in the everlasting JEHOVAH, and which, like him, will endure for ever! Finally, and to speak without a metaphor, you may be led hereby in true repentance to the great redeeming God, whose name is Jesus Christ, and who has his kingdom in the centre of all human minds, to receive from him, not only the knowledge, but also the love of himself, and so to cherish in your bosoms the blessed rays of this his eternal mercy and truth, that when the *time of fruit cometh*, and the great *Householder sendeth his servants to receive of the fruit of your vineyards*, it may be found in great abundance, to his glory, and to your own eternal bliss!

AMEN.

ON THE
SERVANTS SENT

TO RECEIVE THE
FRUITS OF THE VINEYARD ;

OR THE
REQUIREMENTS OF HEAVENLY TRUTHS.

SERMON XIV.

Matt. xxi. 34.

And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

IN the two preceding discourses it has been considered what we are here to understand by the *fruits* of the vineyard, and by the *time of the fruit drawing near*. I shall now proceed to consider the further lessons of heavenly admonition and instruction suggested by these latter words, “ He sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

The plain and obvious sense of these words, as applied to God, or the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Householder, is this, that he sent to claim the fruits of the vineyard to himself, as properly belonging to himself more than to the husbandmen; inasmuch as the *vineyard* being *his*, the *fruits of the vineyard* must of necessity be *his* also.

By the *servants* whom *he sent*, we may understand (in reference to God, the *great Householder*) all those heavenly teachers and instructors, enlightened by his holy Spirit of truth, whom he hath sent in all ages of the world, to enlighten and to reform mankind. Of consequence, by the *servants* here spoken of, are further meant the heavenly truths themselves, which were taught by those instructors; inasmuch, as all divine and heavenly truth is, in a peculiar sense, the servant of the eternal JEHOVAH, being sent forth from him to execute and fulfil his adorable counsels of mercy and love in regard to man.

Let me entreat, beloved, your *particular* attention to this design and purpose of the Almighty in *sending his servants*, according to this sense of the word, to claim to himself the fruits of the spiritual vineyard, which is his church, that so you may see how his counsel herein is grounded in his most unutterable mercy and love towards mankind.

It is well known, that all men, whether they be good or evil, whether they be righteous or wicked, bring forth some kind of *fruit* in their spiritual vineyards.

For every man's *fruits* are his *works*, and all men do some kind of work or other, according to their

particular calling, genius, or temper, be it good or evil.

It is further known, that an evil or wicked man can bring forth a *fruit*, or do a *work*, which to all *outward* appearance shall be like the fruit or work of a righteous or good man; as for example; a wicked man can give alms to the poor, he can be diligent in the labours of his calling, he can perform outward acts of devotion towards God, and the like.

But notwithstanding all this be known, yet it is not perhaps so well considered, that though all men bring forth fruit, and though the fruit or work of a wicked man, and of a righteous man, may be much alike as to its *external* appearance, yet in the *internal* quality thereof, in the sight of God, there is an immense difference, which difference depends entirely upon the *end regarded* in the fruit or work.

As for example; if God and his word be the end regarded, the fruit is then *good* fruit, and the work a *good* work; and it is so far good, but no further, as God and his word are regarded in it.

But on the contrary, if God and his word are not regarded herein,—if man brings forth fruit, or works a work, only with a view to himself and the world, that is, for the sake of his own honour, gain, or reputation; who cannot see, that in this case the *fruit* must needs be *corrupt fruit*, and the work an *evil work*, whatsoever be its external form or appearance.

For who cannot see, that in this latter case there is nothing of God and his Word in the fruit or work?

And if there be nothing of God and his Word therein, there can be nothing *good* therein, inasmuch as it is an eternal truth, that there is *none good but God*, and therefore nothing can be truly good, but so far as God is in it.

Nay, who cannot see further, that in this latter case, where man brings forth fruit, or doeth a work, merely with a view to himself, that is, to his own honour, gain, or reputation, the fruit must needs be *inwardly* corrupt, and the work *inwardly* evil and full of abomination, howsoever pure and splendid it may appear outwardly, inasmuch as the self of man alone is in it, and the self of man separate from God is most evil, corrupt, and abominable ?

Be it remembered then, as an everlasting truth, that no *good* fruit can be produced, or no *good* work can be wrought by man, but so far as God and his word are regarded in it ; all other fruit, or every other work, must needs be *evil*, because it is full of evil *within*, and may be fitly compared in this case with that natural fruit, which appears beautiful *without*, but within is eaten with worms, or full of rottenness and putridity.

Is it needful to add, that fruits or *works* of this description must needs be unblessed to man, and that there can be no real blessing in them, but so far as they are produced from or wrought in God ? For if God be the one only fountain of all true blessing, then how plain is it to be seen, that no work or deed of man's can have any real blessing or blessedness in it,

but so far as the blessing and blessedness of God is in it ; and that the blessing of God cannot be in it, but so far as God and his word are regarded in it as the great end for which it is wrought or done !

Behold here then, beloved, the true and eternal reason, why God in all ages *has* sent, and in all ages *will send his servants* to receive from the husbandmen the fruits of the spiritual vineyard !

The reason is this:—Unless the fruits be thus given back by the husbandmen unto God, the great *Householder*, under the humble acknowledgment that they are *his fruits*, and produced *from him*, they can never by any possibility become *good* fruits, or bring any *blessing* with them to the spiritual husbandmen.

God therefore in all ages, infinitely willing to promote the eternal happiness of his creatures, hath revealed to man by his servants the word of his eternal truth, to this great end, that man might no longer live unto himself alone, and bring forth fruit unto himself alone, whereby both he and his fruit must needs be unblessed and unholy, being separated from God and his life, but that living unto God, and bringing forth fruit unto him, both he and his fruit might become eternally blessed and holy, being united to and filled with the life of the eternal God, who is the only fountain of all blessedness and of all holiness.

For let us inquire now, what is it which this eternal God hath spoken and revealed to man in all ages by the word of his truth ? Is not the sum and substance thereof contained in these few words of his rightly un-

stood; "Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."*

But who now, let us ask, fulfils this great requirement of the merciful God? Who are they that *give unto the Lord glory and strength*, and that *worship him in the beauty of holiness*?

Surely none can do this, but they who regard God in all their works, acknowledging him therein as the *end* and the *all* thereof, under the conviction that whatsoever is good and wise, and blessed in themselves, or in their works, is from God, and from him alone.

Surely to think of *giving God glory and strength*, or of *worshipping him* acceptably in any other way to the neglect of this, is the error of errors, the vanity of vanity; and "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet, standing in the holy place"† For how can God be truly glorified and acceptably worshipped, but in and by man's works, so far as they are wrought in God, and he is regarded in them? Doth not Jesus Christ say, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit?"‡ But what is this *much fruit* by which the *Father is glorified*, but those good and useful works in which he is regarded as the origin and the end, and which are therefore acknowledged, in all humility of thankfulness and adoration, to be from him, and to be his?

* Psalm xxix. 1, 2.

† Matt. xiv. 15.

‡ John xv. 8.

Besides, do not the works of man constitute the man, and is not every man what his work is, inasmuch as his whole soul and spirit, his love and wisdom, his will and understanding, all his faculties, in short, both of mind and body, must needs be in his work? To separate God then from man's work, by not regarding God therein, or, what is the same thing, by regarding other ends more than God—what is this but separating God from man? and if God be separated from man, what is there left, by which either man can be blessed, or God can be glorified?

Would you then, beloved, avoid this error of errors, this monstrous inconsistency and enormity in the service and the worship of God? Would you fulfil the blessed intentions of the revelation of God, and become partakers of all that inconceivable blessedness which he hath from eternity purposed to all those who shall receive and obey his truth? Learn, then, this short but weighty lesson, when *he sends his servants* (as he certainly will send) *to receive the fruits of your vineyards*, not to send them away empty.—Understand me well—*The servants whom he sends*, are the truths of his holy word; and the truths of his holy word require, not so much for his glory, as for your blessedness, that you should *bring forth much fruit*; or, in other words, that you should *abound in good works*. They require further, in order that your *works* may be *good*, and thereby be blessed to you, that you should regard and acknowledge him therein, as the all of their goodness, and consequently the all of blessing, which can possi-

bly be in either you or your works. If you despise or disregard this requirement of the truth of God, your religion must then needs be altogether a vain and dead thing, and whatsoever may be the profession of your lips, you cannot glorify God, or save yourselves thereby. But if you fulfil this requirement, your religion will then be full of life and blessing, and it will communicate life eternal, and blessing eternal to you, because it will be full of God, and will bring down the life and blessing of God into all that you think or do.

But you ask, How shall we fulfil this requirement, so that we may be partakers of all its blessedness? I answer—Only be sincere in regarding the Lord Jesus Christ in your works. Learn to make him and his word the *end* of all that you intend, think, and do. In your daily callings and employments, and in whatsoever you do, keep your minds perpetually open to his blessed influences, under the constant acknowledgment that all your power to be well employed, and to do the smallest good work, is from him. But, since you cannot regard Jesus Christ as the *end* of your works, only so far as you remove *other* inferior *ends*, such as your own vain glory, and worldly gain, let this be your chief and principal care, to watch against and separate these *lower ends*, that they may never at any time exalt themselves above that great and eternal end, on which your everlasting peace and salvation depends.

If you will be faithful and obedient to these few plain gospel rules, you will then soon bring forth fruit in your vineyards to the glory of the great Householder :

your fruit also will be *good* fruit, because the *goodness* of God will be in it ; and it will be *blessed* fruit, because it will be full of the *blessing of God*. And thus, when *he sendeth his servants to receive this fruit from you*, you will acknowledge it to be his, and give it to him willingly and thankfully, and he will be infinitely delighted therewith, and will give it you back again with this inconceivable and divine benediction. Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a few things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. AMEN.

ON THE
SERVANTS BEING BEATEN,
KILLED, &c.

OR THE
REJECTION AND DESTRUCTION OF DIVINE
TRUTHS.

SERMON XV:

Matt. xxi. 35.

*And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat
one, and killed another, and stoned another.*

THE preceding verse, with which this is immediately connected, runs thus :—“ And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.”

It has already been shewn, in discoursing on these latter words, what is here meant by the *servants*, whom the householder sent to the husbandmen to receive

the fruits of the vineyard; and that according to the spiritual interpretation of the parable, these servants signify the teachers of heavenly truth; and not only the teachers of heavenly truth, but also the heavenly truths themselves which are taught, inasmuch as all truth is in a supreme sense the servant of the great JEHOVAH, sent forth to minister to, and accomplish his divine purposes with respect to man.

From this sense of the word *servants*, it will now plainly appear how we are to understand the words of my text, where it is written, "The husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another."

According to the spiritual interpretation of the parable before us, in its relation to spiritual husbandmen, and the Lord's spiritual vineyard, which is his church, these words can mean nothing more or less than this, that the men of the church, or the spiritual husbandmen, took the heavenly truths, which were sent to them from heaven by the great Householder, to receive the fruits of their vineyard; and when they had taken them, instead of applying them to the blessed purposes for which they were sent, they did violence to them, killed them, and destroyed them.

Let me entreat, beloved, at this time, your most particular attention to this impious and dreadful conduct of the spiritual husbandmen, which perhaps is more common, than we are many of us aware of, and in the guilt of which we ourselves may possibly be involved, when we are least thinking of any such enormity.

It is not possible, however, to know wherein the guilt and enormity of this conduct consists, unless it be previously known in some degree *what is the nature of the life of truth, and how the life of truth may be taken away*. Let this then be the previous subject of our consideration.

And, first, in regard *to the life of truth*.

This is a subject, it is to be feared, at this day but little considered by the generality of those who call themselves Christians, and it is to the want of such consideration we may impute, in a great measure, the *errors of judgment* and the *evils of practice*, which so much abound at present in the Christian world.

Few perhaps are well aware that truth has *any particular life* in it—fewer still perhaps are aware in what the life of truth consists—and perhaps fewest of all are rightly informed that truth, deprived of its life, ceases to be truth, and is a mere dead and unprofitable thing.

Howbeit, the general ignorance and inattention of mankind cannot change the nature of things. Though man, through a careless and criminal thoughtlessness, may not know it, yet it is eternally and unalterably true, that *truth has a life in it*; and also, that *its life may be taken away from it*; and further, that when its life is taken away from it, *it ceases to be what it was before, and becomes a mere lifeless and offensive carcase*.

You are perhaps, beloved, some of you, amongst the number of those who have not heretofore given this subject the attention it deserves. You are surpris-

sed to hear of *the life of truth*, and of *taking away its life*, and wonder what is meant by these expressions. It is high time, then, that you should *now* learn what these expressions mean, because of their close connection with *that* which ought to be dearer to you than any thing in the world besides, viz. your religion, your eternal life; or, in other words, the true knowledge and worship of God, in your own hearts and lives.

Would you know then what is meant by the *life of truth*? I will endeavour to explain it to you.

The life of truth, and the *only* life of truth, is *love* and *charity*, love to God, or the Lord Jesus Christ, and charity one towards another.

All the truths of the Word of God, from the beginning to the end of the Bible, are full of this life; the reason is, they proceed from God, or Jesus Christ, who is the purest and most essential *love*, and therefore they must necessarily themselves partake of this love, and be filled with it.

Accordingly Jesus Christ declares, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life;"* and in another place, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life;"† plainly intimating hereby, that his word, which is *the truth*, is in the fullest and closest connection with his *life*, and his *life* cannot be, or mean any thing else, but his *love*.

And as all the truths of God's word are thus full of the life of love and charity, so are they intended to

* John vi. 63.

† John xiv. 6.

convey or communicate that ever-blessed life unto man, by making him full of love and charity also. This indeed is the one *great* end, and the *only* end of the revelation of the truths of God, to purge man from his evil, perverted, and defiled love, that so he may be renewed and reformed in the pure and holy love of God, the supreme good, and thus find again the kingdom of heaven, the paradise of righteousness and peace in his bosom; and therefore Jesus Christ saith, in another place, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them."*

This, then, is what is meant by *the life of truth*.

You will now easily be able to apprehend what is meant by *taking away this life*.

If love and charity be *the life of truth*, then it is plain, that to take away the life of truth, is to deprive it of love and charity.

But you ask, How is it possible to deprive truth of love and charity?

I will endeavour also to explain this matter to you, entreating your most earnest attention as to a subject of the utmost importance.

It has been already observed, that every truth of the word of God is full of the life of heavenly love and charity; and that it is sent or given to man, in order to communicate to him that heavenly life.

* John xvii. 26.

It is not possible now for man to deprive truth of its heavenly life, whilst it remains in its divine source or fountain, which is the Word of God ; for in that, its source, it must needs ever be united with its life ; just as the light of the sun, in its source, is ever united with its heat.

But it is possible for man, we know, to take the truths of God out of the Word, and receive them into his own mind, or memory, as every one doth, whensoever he either hears or reads the word of God ; and here it is, that the truth is in danger of being deprived of its life.

For are there any, who, in hearing or reading the Word of God, are in no desire of profiting by what they hear or read ? Are there any, who thus hear and read in a state of heart unconverted to God, and impenitent ? Are there any, who, in consequence hereof, have their hearts full of a love contrary to that which is in the truth of God's word ; as for example, full of the inordinate love of himself and of this world, full of the inordinate love of pleasure, of gain, or of vain glory, or any other foolish and unreasonable affection, which is opposite to the pure love of God and of his neighbour ? Are there, in short, any, who thus *eat the bread of their God* with unclean hands*, and unsanctified hearts ? How plain is it to see, in this case, that whatsoever truth from the Word of God enters into

* Numb. xxi. 6.

their minds or memories, it will quickly be deprived of all its life of love and charity!

For how plain is it to see, that, in this case, the evil and unrighteous love, which is in the man's heart, will soon destroy the good and righteous love, which is in the truths that he has heard and read! Just, for instance, as if a sheep or a lamb was to be taken into a den of lions or wolves, who cannot see, that the lions and wolves would quickly destroy the life of the sheep or lamb, and tear it in pieces.

Truth, thus deprived of its life, it is further to be observed, becomes a mere dead carcase, and, like all other carcases, is extremely loathsome, offensive, and useless; and such is the truth of all those, who say they have truth, and yet have not charity, and the works of charity; or, in other words, who say they have the knowledge of God, and yet are destitute of the life and the love of God, living in vanity, thoughtlessness, and worldly-mindedness. Whatsoever the intellectual attainments of such persons may be, or howsoever they may imagine themselves to be in the faith, or in the truth, there is reason to fear, that in the sight of God, they are seen like unto those *whited sepulchres*, of which the Lord speaks, "which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness."*

Behold here then, beloved, how, and in what manner, *the life of truth may be taken away and destroyed!*

* Matt. xxiii. 27.

It cannot be taken away and destroyed in its fountain, any more than the life of God can be destroyed in its fountain ; but it may be taken away and destroyed, when it is separated from its fountain, and received into the mind or memory of man : and it is in danger of being so destroyed by every unreasonable and vain affection of man's heart ; by every inordinate love or lust ; by every wrong attachment or criminal inclination ; by every perverse thought, and false persuasion of the impenitent, unconverted, and unregenerate mind. These are the cruel lions and wolves which destroy and devour the innocent sheep and lambs of heaven. These are the wicked and ungodly husbandmen, which "take the servants of the great and good Householder, and beat one, and kill another, and stone another. These, in short, are those abominable scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites, in all ages and places, of whom it is eternally true, what was declared of old by the *Lord of life*, "Therefore also, said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles ; and some of them they shall slay and persecute, that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation."*

Beloved, I am persuaded you would all of you tremble at the thought of being of the number of such murderers, and of having the *blood of the prophets required* at your hands. I am persuaded also, you are thank-

* Luke xi. 49, 50.

ful to be warned of your danger, and will be yet further thankful to be taught how you may escape such dreadful guilt; and instead of taking away the life of truth, or doing violence to it, may rather preserve and cherish it, as the source of life eternal in your own bosoms.

Under this persuasion, I beg leave, in all earnestness of affection, and with that zeal which becomes a sincere minister and defender of the truth, to press upon your observation and practice, the following brief admonitions, with which I shall conclude this discourse.

Whensoev^r, from henceforth, you hear or read the Word of God, bethink yourselves well of the *holy life* which it contains, and is filled with; and as you value your eternal well-being, take heed of *depriving it of that holy life*.

For this purpose, be sure never to hear or read the Word of God, or any doctrine of truth thence derived, but in an humble and penitent state of heart before God, under the real acknowledgment of your many evils, and of the necessity of receiving new life, or new love, before you can enter into the kingdom of heaven: otherwise, when you are not aware of it, the evils of your hearts, which are unrepented of, and consequently unremoved, will assuredly take the truths which you hear and read, and *beat one, kill another, and stone another*.

Let it therefore be your most earnest and constant prayer to God, that you may be *delivered from this*

most dreadful of all blood-guiltiness ; remembering well the divine caution and admonition, “ ‘Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm ;’ ”* and under the full conviction, that to destroy in your own hearts the life of truth, which is the life and the love of God, is as great an offence against God, and as destructive and hurtful to your own souls, as to kill a prophet, an apostle, or an evangelist.

If you will attend well to these few admonitions, you will soon be made sensible of their salutary effect upon your hearts and lives. The truths of the Word of God will then always find your minds in a fit and prepared state for their reception. There will be no longer any *beating*, any *killing*, any *stoning* of these heavenly messengers ; but instead of such outrage, you will give them the welcome of affection and friendship, as to the servants of God. Nor will your welcome of friendship and affection be unrewarded ; for they, in their turn, will give unto you what they are commissioned from their great Lord to give, and what they bear constantly in their bosom, viz. *the pearl of great price, the hidden manna, the fruit of the tree of life* ; or, to speak plainly, and without a metaphor, the holy and eternal life of God, which is the life of heavenly love and charity. They will make this their life to be your life, and their God to be your God ; and thus opening in you the everlasting kingdom of divine righteousness, peace, and truth, by effecting your con-

* Psalm cv, 15.

junction with Jesus Christ, in his life and love, they will convince you experimentally of his promised blessing to all who should receive aright the truths of his Word, where it is written, "He that receiveth you, receiveth me ; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me."* AMEN.

* Matt. x. 40.

ON THE
OTHER SERVANTS MORE THAN THE
FIRST ;
OR THE
REPEATED MESSAGES OF GOD TO MAN.

SERMON XVI.

Matt. xxi. 36.

*Again he sent other servants more than the first,
and they did unto them likewise.*

THESE words are in immediate connexion with the two preceding verses, which run thus : “ And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.”

It has already been shewn what we are here to understand by the *servants*, whom the “ householder sent to the husbandmen, to receive the fruits of the vineyard ;” and further, what we are to understand by the

“husbandmen taking the servants, and beating one, and killing another, and stoning another.”

The servants, spiritually considered, are the truths of God’s Word, which are ever sent by the great Householder to the spiritual husbandmen, for the sake of procuring and receiving spiritual fruit, inasmuch as none can produce spiritual fruit, that is, fruit unto God, but by and through the truths of the Word of God.

To *beat*, to *kill*, and to *stone* these servants, then, denotes the various ways by which unfaithful husbandmen, in all ages and places, do violence to, and destroy the heavenly truths of God’s Word. This, it was shewn, is principally done by destroying *the life of truth*, which is the life of love and charity; and truth is thus deprived of its life, whensoever it is received into the understanding *alone*, and doth not enter into and influence the will, the affections, and the life of man.

Notwithstanding the violence thus done to the *first servants* sent by the good Householder to receive the fruits of the vineyard, we find him still urgent with the same blessed motives, and to the same adorable ends; *again he sent other servants more than the first.*

And notwithstanding this *repeated* and *increased* mercy and kindness of the good Householder, we find the unfaithful husbandmen still persisting in their obstinate rejection of, and outrageous violence against the heavenly messengers sent unto them; *they did unto them likewise*, that is, they *beat one, killed another, and stoned another.*

Two considerations of the utmost importance are here suggested to our notice.

First, *The persevering kindness of the good Householder*; and

Secondly, *The persevering obstinacy of the unfaithful husbandmen.*

May I bespeak your most earnest attention to each of these considerations! And, first, *To the persevering kindness of the good Householder.*

Again he sent other servants more than the first.

From the beginning of the creation this scripture hath been fulfilled respecting the great Creator, and there hath been no age or time in which he hath not been sending *other servants more than the first, to receive the fruits* of his spiritual vineyard, the church.

Immediately after the fall of our first parents from that blessed life and order of heaven, in which they were created, the good *Householder* was not forgetful of the work of his hands, but by the dictates of his holy Spirit in their hearts, sent these his heavenly messengers and servants to call them back again into that paradise which they had forfeited, that so both he and they might again enjoy the blessed fruits of it.

Again, when the world was further lost in wickedness, by a further miserable departure from the law of the love of God in their hearts and lives, which ended in the destruction thereof by a flood; the *righteous Noah* was *another servant* sent by the heavenly *Householder*, to make known his eternally holy and blessed will to the spiritual husbandmen, and thus receive again the fruits of the spiritual vineyard.

To the labours of this servant succeeded those of divers *others*, for the same blessed purposes. Who hath not read how Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the patriarchs, in their respective generations, were so many heavenly messengers from the holy God to deliver his people a message of mercy and truth, respecting the fruit of their vineyard ?

Who hath not heard also of Moses and Aaron, and an innumerable company of holy priests and Levites under the old law, to whom the divine Householder revealed further his holy will for the fructification of his church, when the thunderings and lightnings from Mount Sinai proclaimed the majesty and the sanctity of the law of the Ten Commandments, which have remained in all ages, and still remain unto this day, to call man back again unto his God, that his vineyard may be rendered fruitful in all heavenly righteousness, joy, and peace ?

But the time would fail me, to tell of all the *other servants* who had their commission from the great Householder, for the same blessed ends and purposes. You have all read of Gideon, and of Barak ; of Samson, and of Jephthah ; of Samuel also, and David, and the prophets ; and you cannot but know how these also were *other servants* of God, *more than the first* ; sent by him, in their generations, unto the spiritual husbandmen, to declare to them that law of eternal life, whereby both they and the fruit of their vineyards might be received back again into the bosom of the everlasting Lord, and thus be blessed in the participations of his unutterable mercy and truth.

But why need we thus look back to the records of the old world, to be convinced of this continual persevering will and blessed purpose of the divine Householder respecting his vineyard? Surely there is sufficient evidence nearer home, and in our own time, in confirmation of this great truth; and we need but look each of us into our own minds and consciences to be fully persuaded, that the God of infinite mercy will never cease to send *other servants more than the first*, to recall and recover back unto himself the fruit of his spiritual vineyard, that so it may be eternally blessed unto the spiritual husbandmen.

For let me ask—Who amongst us, at one time or other, hath not received a message from the holy God in his mind and conscience, speaking to this effect,—“Give me the fruit of thy vineyard?” Yea, who amongst us hath not heard this message *often repeated*, and thus been visited by *other servants* of the great Householder, *more than the first*?

Let us examine this matter attentively, because our everlasting well-being is involved in it.

How often have we heard our duty towards God enforced and explained! How often have we been called to repent, and to turn with our best affections unto God, that so we may love him with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength! How often have we been admonished by words from *without*, and also by dictates from *within*, that we were not created for this perishable world only, but for the everlasting enjoyment of God in another and an eternal world; and

that, therefore, the best and only wise use we can make of our present lives in this world, is to prepare our souls for that eternal enjoyment, by giving back unto God all that we receive from him! How often have the lessons of heavenly truth and wisdom been thus sounded in our ears, and repeated calls given us to devote ourselves to the living God, and to enter into a covenant of righteousness and peace with the Father of spirits! How often have we been warned of the danger and delusion of sin, and been shewn the necessity thereby of setting a watch over our own hearts! How often, in short, have we been taught, that our truest wisdom is to be acquainted with God, and that our highest blessedness is to become again his images and likenesses, by a thorough conformity of our lives to the words of his truth, and the dictates of his eternal Spirit within us!

We have not, perhaps, been visited *personally* with this message, by immediate servants from God, such as righteous Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or the patriarchs of old. We have not been with Moses upon Mount Sinai, and beheld the visible glory of the Almighty, and heard him speak to us face to face. We have not, perhaps, seen in our streets one of the old prophets, preaching repentance, and calling unto newness of life. But what then? We have heard the same heavenly lessons, and the same heavenly language, which were once spoken by Noah, by Abraham, by Isaac, by Jacob, by the patriarchs, by Moses, and by the prophets: and what matters it, who or

what the instrument is, by which the will and the wisdom of God is made known to us, provided it be but made known? If all the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, that ever lived upon earth, were to preach daily in our streets, they could only deliver to us the same message of truth and wisdom, which we have already received, and heard a thousand times repeated in our ears.

Behold here then, beloved, the merciful and persevering kindness of the good Householder, and how in all ages, and amongst all people, he hath earnestly sought to recover to himself his lost vineyard, that so the spiritual husbandmen might be delivered from the sin and misery of living unto themselves alone, and by rendering back unto God that which, of right, belongeth to him, might become everlastingly blessed in the further participations of his unutterable mercy, truth, and peace!

And may this consideration lead us to reflect worthily upon that astonishing mercy and love of our heavenly Father, which is thus earnest to gather to himself, both us and the fruit of our vineyards! May it lead us further to reflect aright upon the importance and the sanctity of those repeated messages of truth, which he is continually sending to us for this blessed purpose! May we henceforth be enabled to see, that wheresoever truth is, there a servant of God is; and wheresoever a servant of God is, there God himself is! May we thus be led to receive and venerate the truth, as we would receive and venerate

the God of truth, and to be as much afraid of rejecting and destroying the message, as we would be afraid of rejecting and destroying him who sends it, and whose it is!—But, oh! above all, may we be led to remember, what it is, which hath in all former ages, and which doth also in our age, alone reject and destroy the truth, viz. that it is the vain and foolish love of ourselves, of the world, and the flesh, more than of God and our neighbour; and that therefore we can in no other possible way, cherish and keep alive the truth in ourselves, but by renouncing vain affections, that so the love of God and of our neighbour may prevail and rule in us.

To conclude—You have now heard another message from God—*another servant* hath this day been sent unto you from the great Householder, to *receive the fruit of your vineyards*—Oh, consider not the instrument by whom this message is sent, but rather consider him, from whom it is sent, and whose servant it is—consider his gracious purpose in sending it, and the infinite and astonishing mercy and love which is in it—consider what so holy and awful message hath now entered into your ears—the Creator and Redeemer of the world makes a demand upon you; a demand of the fruit of your vineyards; a demand which you cannot refuse him, without destroying yourselves; and which, whensoever you are wise enough to grant it to him, will prove your salvation. He only asks for *that*, which it will be *death* to you to keep from him, and which he will give you back again with *life eternal*,

when he sees you obedient to his heavenly message. Oh, then, let the mercy and the wisdom of that message now find a place in your hearts, that so you may be led to answer the just demands of a merciful and righteous God. Let it never be said of you, that when the heavenly Householder "sent other servants unto you more than the first, you did unto them likewise." Rather let it be said of you, "Blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it."* AMEN.

* Luke xi, 28.



ON THE
PERSEVERING OBSTINACY
OF THE
UNFAITHFUL HUSBANDMEN.

SERMON XVII.

Matt. xxi. 36.

And again he sent other servants more than the first, and they did unto them likewise.

IN the foregoing discourse was pointed out the persevering kindness of the good Householder, in sending *other servants more than the first*, to receive the fruit of his vineyard.

I shall now proceed to consider, as was further proposed, the persevering obstinacy of the unfaithful husbandmen, to whom these other servants were sent, as expressed in these latter words of the text, *They did unto them likewise.*

The lesson of spiritual instruction intended for our use by these words of the parable, appears to be this; that whosoever, in consequence of evil of life, rejects

and destroys in himself *one truth* of God and heaven, rejects and destroys in himself *all the truths* of God and heaven.

I say, *in consequence of evil of life*, by which is to be understood *the government of an evil love*; for every man's *life* is such as his *governing love* is. If the governing love be *good*, that is, towards God and the things of his kingdom, then the life will of necessity be *good*; but if the governing love be *evil*, that is, towards the world and the flesh, then the life must of necessity be *evil* also.

Let me call your particular attention to this consideration, how *evil of life*, that is, an evil governing love, rejects and destroys in man, not *one only*, but *all the truths* of God and heaven.

It is generally supposed, that a man who is *in evil of life*, can receive and believe the truths of God, and thereby have faith, as fully and as perfectly as another man who is *in the good of life*.

But this supposition, if it be carefully examined, will be found to be altogether groundless, and without foundation.

It is indeed true, that an evil man, or one who is in evil of life, can *see* the truths of God as well as a good man, or one who is in the good of life; but then it is well to be considered, that there is a great difference between *merely seeing* the truth, and what is called in the sacred Scriptures *receiving* and *believing* the truth.

An evil man may *see* the truth, but then he doth not *receive* and *believe* it. The reason is, the truth enters

into and manifests itself in his *understanding* or *thought*, but then it doth not enter into and affect his *will* and *intentions*; and whatsoever doth not enter into and affect man's will and intentions, cannot be said to enter into, or make any part of the man; inasmuch as the *will and intention* is the *whole* of man; and the *understanding*, separate from the will and intention, makes properly *no part* of the man.

A man, who is in *evil of life*, may say, that he believes in God, and in the revelation of God: he may profess with his lips, that there is a heaven and a hell, and that good men go after death to the former, and wicked men to the latter: he may assent also to most other spiritual truths discoverable from the Word of God; and on this account he *fancies* that he *believes* them, and would be much offended with any one who should endeavour to convince him to the contrary.

But if it be true, as the Scripture testifieth, that man believeth *with the heart*, and that he can *only* believe *with the heart*, then it is equally true, that this man, who is in *evil of life*, notwithstanding all his professions, *cannot believe*. The reason is, because *his heart* is not in his belief; and if *his heart* be not in it, *he himself* is not in it; for the heart or the love, as was before observed, is what properly constitutes the man.

If, therefore, the mind of a man, who is in *evil of life*, could be inwardly examined and seen into, as it is examined and seen by the all-piercing eye of God, it would most assuredly be found, that he doth not believe in a *single* truth of the Word of God; but that

he violently rejects and destroys them all in himself, as they enter into his understanding, notwithstanding the appearance to himself that he receives and admits them all.

And would you know, beloved, the deep reason and eternal ground of this, and why an evil man cannot possibly believe the truths of God; it is because *evil* and *truth* are two *opposites*, and are therefore continually acting in contrariety the one to the other: for evil is from *beneath*; truth is from *above*: evil is from the *evil one*, that is, the devil; truth is from the *good one*, that is, from God: evil, wheresoever it enters, creates hell, and misery, and darkness; truth, wheresoever it enters and is received, makes heaven, and happiness, and light: evil, therefore, is the destroyer of man; truth is man's saviour: evil is a thing most defiled, most deformed, and hateful; truth is a thing most pure, most beautiful, and lovely. Between two such opposites, it must be plain to see, there can be no possibility of agreement; and hence it is, that in whatsoever heart of man the love of evil bears rule, and hath the ascendancy, there truth, with all its heavenly family of intelligences, graces, and virtues, must of necessity be expelled, persecuted, and slain.

The Lord speaks of this internal and eternal opposition subsisting between evil and truth, where he saith, "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved;"* and in another place, "No man can serve two masters,

* John iii. 20.

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.**"*

Behold here then the true and eternal reason, why they who are in the love of evil, or, what is the same thing, in whom an evil love hath the rule of ascendancy, cannot possibly receive the truths of God, but must needs reject, destroy, and slay them *all* in their hearts and lives, like the unfaithful husbandmen described in the parable.

The reason why they must needs reject, destroy, and slay them *all*, is this :

All truths relating to God and his kingdom are *one*, and are united together in a unity which is indivisible. They may be compared in this respect to one heavenly and beautiful form or body, which, though composed of innumerable parts and organs, is yet but *one* form or body : this is the case with all the truths contained in the word of God, or the sacred scriptures : they appear indeed as if they were diverse, scattered, and disunited, and as if they had little or no connexion with each other ; when yet the fact is, there is the closest relationship, harmony, and oneness, subsisting between them, whereby they not only are *one*, but also act as *one*, and are accordingly received or rejected as *one*.

As for example—a good man, that is, one who is in the love of good, which is the love of God and of his neighbour, by virtue of the good in which his mind is principled, rejoices in hearing or reading the truths

* Matt. vi. 24.

of the word of God, because he finds them in agreement with, and highly congenial to the principle of good in his own mind. I say then, that this good man, so hearing and reading, receives not *one only*, but *all* the truths of the heavenly volume, in consequence of their unity and indivisibility; and whether he thinks of it or not, he is in the *all* of truth, and the *all* of truth is likewise in him, opening, creating, and forming in him its own heaven of righteousness and peace.

On the contrary, an evil man, that is, one who is in the love of evil, which is the inordinate love of himself and the world, more than of God and his neighbour, though he may seem to himself to receive *some* truths from the word of God, when he hears or reads it, yet in reality he receives *none*. The reason is, his evil is contrary to the *whole* truth, and truth cannot be received *in part* only. Inasmuch, therefore, as he rejects and destroys the *whole*, he must of necessity reject and destroy all its parts.

Much of serious and instructive reflection, beloved, will be excited in your minds by what has been said, if it be duly attended to.

You will learn from it, how much reason you have to tremble at, and to be upon your guard against, the *love of evil*, or an *evil love*, which thus in its very nature is contrary to *all* the truths of God, and therefore will infallibly *slay* them *all* in your minds, so far as it is suffered to have the pre-eminence.

You will therefore see the necessity of making it a subject of your continual prayers to God, to discover to you more especially what your *governing love* is,

whether it be in *good* or in *evil*, under a serious apprehension, that your reception or your rejection of heavenly truth will depend altogether upon this ruling principle in your minds.

But you will not be content in this case with *only* praying to God. Recollecting that your salvation depends upon this discovery, and under a just alarm lest the folly of the unfaithful husbandmen should be your folly, you will not fail to search into and examine most diligently your own minds by the light of God's word, touching the most secret purposes, ends, and intentions of your lives, whether they be *towards* God, or *from* God. You will never rest till you thus know *what you are*, or what is the same thing, what *your love is* : and you will be afraid at any time of hearing or of reading the truths of God, unless you have good ground to believe, that you have first discovered and put away *that* in yourselves, which would defile or destroy them.

'Thus, you may have the most comfortable satisfaction to hope, that you will never be found amongst the number of the *unfaithful husbandmen*. The God of mercy will assuredly make known to you that *evil love* in yourselves, which is the sole destroyer of his truth, whensoever he sees you *desirous* to know it. He will also remove and separate it from you, whensoever he perceives you *willing* to have it removed and separated. And so far as an evil love is removed and separated, so far a good love will assuredly enter and be implanted ; and with this good love will be received at the same time the affection, the intelligence,

and the perception of all heavenly truth, because on this love is ever inscribed the divine blessedness, where it is written, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear."* AMEN

* Matt. xiii, 16.

ON THE
HOUSEHOLDER'S SON,
WITH THE
REVERENCE DUE TO HIM, AND THE MANNER IN
WHICH HE IS STILL CRUCIFIED.

SERMON XVIII.

Matt. xxi. 37, 38, 39.

*But last of all he sent unto them his Son, saying,
They will reverence my Son.*

*But when the husbandmen saw the Son, they said
among themselves, This is the heir: come, let
us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.
And they caught him, and cast him out of the
vineyard, and slew him.*

THE Son here spoken of hath manifest allusion to the Son of God, who was sent into the world by his Father, the great *Householder*, to receive the fruit of his spiritual vineyard, the church,

You have often been taught from this place, that by God's sending his *Son* into the world, is meant his own descent and divine manifestation in the flesh, or human nature, to be a *Redeemer* and *Saviour*; and that under this manifestation his name was called Jesus Christ, who is therefore the *most high* God, differing from the eternal *Father* only in this, that he is the *Father manifested*, and *united to the human nature*, which he assumed.

I shall not, therefore, take up your present time with any further confirmations or elucidations of this great *Gospel* truth, but shall rather call your attention to a few observations respecting the atrocious conduct of the unfaithful husbandmen in rejecting and slaying this *Son* of the great *Householder*.

It might certainly have been expected, and nothing could be more reasonable than the expectation, that when the *Son* of the *most high* God appeared upon earth, he would have been received there by all ranks and orders of people, with a spirit and temper agreeable to the declaration of the great *Householder*, "They will reverence my *Son*."

It it be considered who this *Son* was, what was his extraordinary birth and character, and what the blessed intent of his appearing, viz. to make his creatures eternally wise and happy; who would not have concluded, that his creatures would have received him accordingly, and that with one heart and one mind they would have sung *hosannas* to this *Son of David*, this prince of everlasting peace? Who would not have

concluded, that the world henceforth would *learn righteousness*; that all would go and be taught of this eternal wisdom to walk in the paths of peace; and that mankind, *receiving power from him to become the sons of God*, would thus have entered again into that paradise of innocence and bliss from which they were fallen?

Who, at least, could have conceived it possible that the *Maker and Saviour* of the world, when he appeared in it, should have been treated with the slightest degree of indignity by that world which he had made, and which he came to save? Could it have entered into any human heart to imagine, that on such an occasion the prophetic words of this mighty *Son* would have been fulfilled, which he before spake respecting himself, when he said, "They caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him."

And yet notwithstanding all this appearance of improbability and impossibility, such inconceivable indignity and barbarity was exercised towards this *Son* of the great *Householder*. So far from being *reverenced*, as might have been reasonably expected, we behold him derided, rejected, and slain. So far from being exalted as a God, he is degraded below a *man*: the Saviour of the world is thought not able to save himself; the Lord of the vineyard is cast out of it; and the wicked husbandmen are foolish enough to think that the vineyard will become to them an inheritance, by the destruction of the *Son*. They will *make it either their inheritance or their burning*.

You are astonished, beloved, as well you may be, at this unparalleled folly, and outrageous injustice of the Jews of old. You wonder how they could thus divest themselves of every principle of reason and humanity. You are shocked at that blindness which could not discern the glories of a *manifested* God ; and you are more shocked still at that hardness of heart, which was insensible to the tenderness of redeeming love, and which refused obedience to the calls of that mercy, which would again have opened heaven and paradise.

Possibly too you congratulate yourselves, and the Christian world in which you have had the happiness to be born, that you are not of the number of such murderers. You rejoice to think, that the world is now grown better and wiser than at the time when the *Son* of the great Householder was sent into it, to receive the fruits of his vineyard ; and you conceive therefore that it is impossible for the husbandmen *now* to do what the husbandmen did *then*, viz. *cast him out of the vineyard, and slay him.*

You certainly do well to be astonished, and to be shocked at the folly and wickedness of the Jews of old ; and you cannot possibly excite in your minds too much horror at their atrocious proceedings in regard to the Son of God who appeared amongst them.

But, when you congratulate yourselves and the Christian world, that you are not involved in Jewish guilt—when you conclude that the world is now grown so much better and wiser, that it is impossible the Saviour

and it should be again crucified and slain ; in this I must beg leave to suggest caution to you, lest, flattering yourselves with false appearances of the world about you, as if it was better and wiser, and more innocent than it really is, you should fall into a careless and dangerous security, which may be fatal to your best interests.

I shall beg leave, therefore, on this occasion, to propose to your most serious consideration and examination, these few important but alarming inquiries.

Is it not a notorious fact, that in the present Christian world, so called, the high and holy name of Jesus Christ, together with his sacred word and commandment, is much reproached and blasphemed ?

Have we not lately seen a great and numerous people, who constituted a very considerable part of what is called the Christian world, absolutely rejecting the authority of the *Gospel*, and saying of Jesus Christ, in the language of the most terrible apostacy, “ We will not have this man to reign over us ?

In our own nation also, are not the principles of irreligion and infidelity gaining ground upon us ? Do we not find, amongst all orders and classes of people in our land, a miserable relaxation of the bonds of religious influence ? And hath not the consequence been a rejection of the Householder's Son ; a denial of the divinity and supremacy of that Saviour, to whom alone the vineyard of right belongeth ?

But to bring the inquiry nearer to our own bosoms.

The apostle speaks of those, who, through the prevalence of evil, falling away from the convictions of truth which they had received, “crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”*

From this declaration of the apostle’s, we are certainly warranted in this conclusion, that *all evil crucifies the Son of God*; that every inordinate lust, therefore, every unbridled passion, every temper and affection of the human heart, which is not under the government of heavenly wisdom, doeth all that at this day to the Saviour of the world which the Jews of old did, when they said, “Crucify him, crucify him.”

We cannot indeed, at this day, take away the *bodily* life of Jesus Christ: we cannot nail him to a *cross of wood*, as the Jews of old did, when they crucified him between two thieves: but what then? we can do what is alike enormous, and alike destructive of our eternal welfare; we can destroy in ourselves his *spiritual* life; we can by our vain affections and foolish imaginations nail him to a *spiritual cross*: and which are we to suppose is the greater sin, to destroy the *body*, or to destroy the *soul*? to crucify Christ *in person*, or Christ *in spirit*?

Here then let the inquiry be continued, and let it be asked, What is the present temper and spirit of ourselves, and of the world about us? Do we see those, who call themselves Christians, living by a Christian temper and spirit? Do we live by such a temper and spirit ourselves? Are our lives under the direction of

* Heb. vi. 6.

the wisdom of Jesus Christ, or are they influenced by a contrary wisdom? Have we, in short, the *life of Christ*, or do we reject that life, by obeying the dictates of the contrary life, which is according to the spirit of that nature and kingdom, which Christ came to destroy in us?

God forbid, beloved, that I should put you upon vain and scrupulous inquiries, or suggest vain and groundless alarm—but God forbid also, that you should not be alarmed where there is just cause, and that you should not be directed to those inquiries which are necessary to lead you to a right knowledge of yourselves, and of the world in which you live. For surely, it is only by alarm proportioned to its cause, and by some such questions as the above, seriously proposed, and as seriously answered, that we can come to know either the state of the world about us, or our own state; consequently that we can determine how far at this day we are, or are not, acting the part of the unfaithful husbandmen of old, of whom it is written, that when the Householder sent his Son to them, they *caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.*

Let us not shrink then from these salutary inquiries, which have a tendency thus to open our eyes to a just knowledge both of ourselves, and of our fellow-men. It may be, the investigation will bring many things to our view, which are not as they ought to be, and which therefore will not be pleasant to see manifested. We shall discover possibly that the Christian world is not

altogether so Christian as the name implies. We shall find in it much evil and enormity, contrary to the holy spirit and temper of him, whom it professes to follow and serve. We shall perhaps make the same discovery respecting ourselves—we shall see, to our surprise, that the religion of Jesus Christ has never yet had its full effect upon us; that there is a life still in ourselves contrary to the life of the Son of God, whose disciples we call ourselves. We shall thus learn that it is *possible* at least, that the Son of the Householder may at this day be *caught, cast out of the vineyard, and slain*, as he was by the unfaithful husbandmen of former times.

But shall we on this account suspend such salutary inquiry, because it may discover evil to us, which we before were not aware of? Surely this is a poor reason for our neglecting the use of our eyes and senses. For if the evil really exists, it is certainly better and safer that it should be known, than that it should lie concealed. If it be known, it may then be avoided, and we may be upon our guard against its infection and its poison: but if it be *not* known, it may destroy us before we are aware of it.

Let us then, if we wish not to be numbered amongst the unfaithful husbandmen, and to contract the terrible guilt of *casting out and slaying* the Son of the great Householder, offer up our most fervent prayers to that Son, that he would give us the spirit of judgment and understanding to discern aright both the state of the world about us, and the state also of our own hearts;

that so, seeing the danger to which we are exposed, when we are least aware of it, of *crucifying the Son of God afresh*, we may be led to shun this most tremendous of all human evils; and thus, cherishing the holy and blessed spirit of that *Son* in our affections and lives, may attain to all the holiness and happiness of which the great Householder spake, when he said, "They will reverence my Son." AMEN.

SEIZING THE SON'S INHERITANCE ;

OR THE

DENIAL THAT ALL HEAVENLY LIFE AND POWER
IS RECEIVED FROM GOD, AND IS THEREFORE
HIS PROPERTY.

 SERMON XIX.

Matt. xxi. 38.

*But when the husbandmen saw the Son, they said
among themselves, This is the heir ; come, let
us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.*

WE have already, in the preceding discourse, considered the conduct of these wicked husbandmen, in their rejection and destruction of the *Son*, who was sent unto them by the good Householder.

But there is yet another circumstance of their atrocious conduct, which well deserves our most serious consideration, and which is expressed in these latter words of the text, *Let us seize on his inheritance.*

There are perhaps few persons, who have given this circumstance due attention ; few, who have considered aright either what is meant by the Son's *inheritance* here spoken of, or by the husbandmen's *seizing upon it*.

We are all of us, in a greater or less degree, too apt to read the sacred Scriptures *carelessly*. We catch at the sight and sound of the words, and are content, without thinking of the sense which they involve ; without reflecting, that every expression of the Word of God is divine, and must therefore needs contain in it a divine meaning.

How often, for instance, have we all of us read and heard these words of my text, spoken by the wicked husbandmen, " Let us seize on his inheritance !" But have we all of us been led as often to consider with ourselves what these words imply ? Have we discovered their instructive and divine meaning ? Have we dived into the *deep*, to fetch up the *pearls* of wisdom there concealed ? or have we been satisfied with the *straws* which float on the surface ?

Perhaps we cannot all of us give a satisfactory answer to these questions. There is, then, the greater need of *present* attention, whilst we enter upon a more particular consideration of the subject under these two general views.

First, What the term *inheritance*, here applied to the property of the Son of the great Householder, involves. Secondly, What was the crime of the *unfaithful husbandmen*, in thinking to *seize upon it*.

First, then, let us consider what the term *inheritance*, as applied to the property of the *Son* of the great Householder, involves.

There is much mention made of *inheritance* in the sacred Scriptures, as applied to God, or, what is the same thing, as applied to the *Son* of the great Householder ; and according to such application, the word is universally used to denote his people Israel.

Thus it is written in the book of Kings, speaking of the children of Israel, “ They be thy people, and thine *inheritance*, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt.”* And in the book of Psalms, “ Blessed be the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he hath chosen for his *own inheritance*.”† And again, in the prophet, “ Blessed be Egypt, my people ; and Assyria, the work of my hands ; and Israel, *mine inheritance*.”‡

In the words of my text, the term *inheritance* is manifestly applied in reference to the vineyard, which the Householder let out to the husbandmen ; but it has already been abundantly shewn, that by the vineyard here spoken of, is spiritually signified the Lord's church ; and as the Lord's church consists of his people, therefore *inheritance*, in this passage, must needs relate to his people also.

From all this evidence then it is very plain, that the term *inheritance*, as applied in my text to the pro-

* 1 Kings viii. 51.

† Psalm xxxiii. 12.

‡ Isaiah xix. 25.

perty of the Son of the great Householder, has relation to all man's living principles, powers, and faculties, whether of mind or of body, whereby he is capable of being made a church, or people, of the Lord his God.

Let me bespeak, beloved, your most earnest attention to this sense of the word *inheritance*, which possibly you have never heretofore considered.

Your own experience and observation will abundantly teach you, that you possess divers faculties and powers, both spiritual and natural, which, taken together in the complex, constitute what you call your *life*. Thus you have the faculty or power of willing or choosing, of thinking, of determining, and of acting; and this, both in a spiritual and in a natural way.

In a spiritual way, you can will or choose what is of God and eternity; you can think also, as often as you please, about God and eternity; and you can determine and act accordingly: and in a natural way, you can will or choose what is of this world, or what relates to your temporal life here below; and you can also think, determine, and act, in reference to this your temporal life and habitation. Under this article of natural powers, may also be reckoned your *time* and your *fortunes*; for these also, like your *talents*, make a part of what you commonly call *yourselves*.

Nothing can be more wonderful and astonishing than these powers and faculties which you enjoy, in common with the rest of mankind; and the due consideration of them must needs lead every thinking person

to exclaim, with the inspired penman, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made."*

But there is one circumstance relating to these powers and faculties, which is not in general so much attended to, as the powers and faculties themselves: I mean, *who is the proprietor of them?* or, *to whom do they properly belong?* and yet this is certainly a point of the utmost importance to be determined.

The careless and unthinking mind, grounding its judgment in mere appearances, says, My powers and faculties are *my own*, and no one has any property in them but myself. Is not my life *my own*? Is not my fortune *my own*? Is not my *time* also *my own*? Do not I will, do not I think and act by and from *myself only*? Who then has any right or property in these things but *myself*?

But what saith the judgment of the eternal wisdom? Let us hearken to its voice, and no longer be deluded by appearances and folly.

"Know ye that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."†

And we are then the workmanship and the people of God? Surely in this case all our powers and faculties are God's also, and he must ever remain the *sole proprietor* of them. He hath indeed given them to us for *use* and for our *bliss*, but still they must remain

* Psalm cxxxix. 14.

† Psalm c. 3.

for ever *his*, and are only *ours* from him. We can do more will, or think, or act, by a power *properly our own*, than we can raise ourselves from the dead; and therefore every time that we exercise a single faculty; whether of mind or of body, whether in regard to our *time* or our *fortunes*, we exercise only a gift which we receive from him, who, to impress deeper on our minds this lesson of eternal wisdom, hath said, “Without me ye can do nothing.”*

Having thus, then, endeavoured to shew what we are to understand by the *inheritance* spoken of in my text, it will now plainly appear in the second place, what was the crime of the unfaithful husbandmen, in thinking to *seize on* this inheritance.

The word in the original, which is here rendered *seize upon*, denotes to *withhold*, or *keep back* by violence; and the idea manifestly suggested is this, that the wicked husbandmen began to persuade themselves, that their life, with all its various powers and faculties, was *their own*, independent of God, and that therefore they were no longer bound to acknowledge God as the source of their life, with its faculties and powers.

Thus they *kept back* or *withheld* this inheritance from God, instead of *restoring* and *returning* it to him, as in justice they were obliged to do. Like that unwise king of old, whom the Lord rebukes by the prophet, they said, “My river is mine own, and I have

* John xv. 5

made it for myself.”* They continued therefore to have life, and to exercise the faculties of life ; but then they separated God from that life, and from those faculties: when they looked into themselves, they saw and acknowledged nothing but themselves, nothing that was superior to, or above themselves, from whence they themselves existed and subsisted: they did not see and acknowledge the life of God in themselves: they did not consider, that all that was called their own life, was only a *derived* life, a life which they received continually from God: the consequence was, that withholding this inheritance from God, they banished at the same time God and his life, with all the blessing, virtue, wisdom, and sanctities thereof, from themselves; or, as it is expressed in the verse immediately succeeding my text, *they caught* the right heir of the inheritance, and “ cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.”

Behold here, beloved, and tremble at the crime and folly of these unhappy husbandmen, who were wicked and weak enough to suppose that their life was *their own*, and not God's; and who, in consequence of this wild imagination, no longer acknowledging God and his life in themselves, separated their own life and all the faculties thereof from the influence, government, guidance, and presence of that divine Being, in whom alone it originated, and by whom alone it could be made blessed.

* Ezek. xxix. 3.

But whilst we see and tremble at the crime and folly of these unhappy husbandmen, let us take heed that the same be not chargeable upon ourselves.

We are all of us exposed to the danger of being deluded by the same foolish and pernicious imagination. We all of us receive life, with its innumerable powers and faculties, continually from God; and if we are not well upon our guard, we shall be tempted to ascribe them to ourselves, and not to God, and thus *seize upon God's inheritance*. There is a secret, but most infernal principle of self-love, lurking in every one of us, which will not fail to be frequently suggesting to us, that *our river is our own*, that our talents are *our own*, that our fortunes are *our own*, that our time is *our own*, in short, that every thing we possess is *our own*, and not God's, and that it is of no great consequence whether we call it God's or our own.

But, beloved, let me most earnestly warn you against the fatal tendencies of such a false and dangerous persuasion. Believe it therefore to be the persuasion of none but of those wicked husbandmen, who say amongst themselves, "This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and let us seize upon his inheritance. Believe it therefore to be a persuasion directly opposite to all the wisdom of God, and tending to destroy in your minds the all of religion, the all of holiness, the all of happiness, because the all of the real sense and acknowledgment of God. For what sense or acknowledgment can you have of God, unless you are sensible of, and acknowledge him in yourselves, as

the continual source of your life and all your faculties? To say you acknowledge God, and yet to separate him from yourselves, by not ascribing to him your life, your talents, your fortunes, your time, and whatever else makes a part of yourselves—what is this but acknowledging God with your lips, and denying him in your hearts? What is it, but being Christians in theory, and atheists in practice?

Beware then, beloved, of such flagrant, such mischievous inconsistency: and if you wish effectually to avoid the crime and folly of the wicked husbandmen in the parable, who thought to seize upon their Lord's inheritance, let me recommend to your most serious attention and observance these few practical lessons.

Learn to confess and acknowledge the great and glorious God continually in yourselves, as the eternal, never-failing source of your life and all its faculties. Look no longer at a God who is only *without* you, but look at a God who is also *within* you. Remove not your heavenly *Father* at a distance from you, by regarding him as unconnected with your life; but bring him near to you, and make him ever present with you, by believing in him as the continual source of your life and of your every faculty. Consider your life thus as a *derived* life, and therefore not *your own*, so much as God's; and consider also your talents, your fortunes, your time, and every thing else, as things belonging properly to God, and only committed to you for use. Learn thus *practically* to ascribe all you have unto the divine Giver; *render unto God*

the things that are God's, and be afraid of keeping any thing back from him, remembering the crime of the wicked husbandmen, and also the like crime of Ananias and Sapphira of old, of whom it is written, *that they kept back part of the price.** Lastly, as an encouragement to you to attend to and observe these precepts, never forget, that they constitute the whole of vital religion and of all true blessedness; inasmuch as the whole of vital religion consists in the above real acknowledgment of God, without which no vital religion can exist; and as to true blessedness, how can any *inheritance* be blessed, if God is not in it? What is your life, what are your best faculties, what are your most splendid talents and fortunes, but so many sources of misery to you, if you separate God and his life from them? To make these things real blessings, you must join God to them, and you cannot join God to them, but so far as you ascribe them unto God; and consider them as *his* property more than *your own*. Learn once to do this, and you will then taste true blessedness; for then the blessing of God will be in all that you possess, and being made sensible of this blessing, your chief and only concern will be to add unto it, by learning more and more to sing that heavenly song, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created."† AMEN.

* Acts v. 2, 3.

† Rev. iv. 11:

ON THE
FATE OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN ;
OR
MAN'S DESTRUCTION IN APPEARANCE FROM GOD,
BUT IN REALITY FROM HIMSELF.

SERMON XX.

Matt. xxi. 40, 41.

*When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh,
what will he do unto those husbandmen ?*

*They say unto him, He will miserably destroy
those wicked men, and will let out the vineyard
unto other husbandmen, who will render him
the fruits in their seasons.*

THESE are the concluding words of that parable concerning the householder and his vineyard, which has been the subject of the foregoing discourses.

They contain an inquiry of singular importance to all serious minds, viz. "What will he do unto those husbandmen ? or, in other words, what will be the con-

sequence of a mispent life? What will be the effect, and the fruit, of acting the part of wicked and unfaithful husbandmen, who reject the counsels of God? What will the *end* be with all those, who are so blinded by the pleasures of sin and folly, of this world and the flesh, as to neglect the great and awful concerns of eternity?

Important and edifying as this inquiry may be, it receives a full answer in the succeeding words of the text, "They say unto him, **He** will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, who will render him the fruits in their seasons.

May I bespeak your present most serious attention to this instructive and momentous answer!

It is very remarkable, that the Lord here asks the question, "**When** the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?" but he doth not give the answer. The answer is given by those around him, "They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, &c.

It must be obvious to every thinking mind, that some great secret or mystery of wisdom is involved in this circumstance; otherwise it will be difficult to assign a reason, why the Lord himself should not pronounce destruction to the wicked, rather than leave it to be pronounced by others.

Permit me to point out to you what this great secret or mystery of wisdom is, which is herein involved.

It appears to be this—The destruction of wicked husbandmen doth not come at all from the Lord of the vineyard, but solely from themselves, being the certain consequence and sure effect of their own wickedness. Nevertheless, though their destruction doth not *in reality* come from the Lord, yet *in appearance* to themselves it comes solely from him, and they cannot help but charge him as the alone cause of it.

Behold here then the true reason, why the Lord *asks the question* concerning the lot of wicked husbandmen, but leaves it to others *to give the answer!*

He asks the question, because it is a question of infinite moment, comprehending in it the weightiest concerns of man, and therefore such a question as all ought to be prepared to answer, inasmuch as there is nothing wanting but a *proper answer* to this question, to make every one live according to those maxims of eternal wisdom, which will make him *wise unto salvation*.

But he leaves it to others to give the answer to this question, for this plain and eternal reason, because they were sure to answer it according to the *appearances* presented in their own minds, and it was better, in respect to the bulk of mankind, for whose use and instruction the question was asked, that it should be answered *according to appearance*, than *according to the reality*.

I will endeavour to explain this matter, so as to make it easy of apprehension, and at the same time to bring home to, and impress on your minds all that lesson of deep and instructive wisdom, which it involves.

Every attentive reader of the word of God must needs see, and be forced to confess, that God cannot be the author of *destruction*, inasmuch as he is ever represented, in his own holy word, to be the purest goodness, the most essential mercy, the creator, and the preserver of what he creates; which characters are utterly inconsistent with the idea of his *destroying*, or *causing destruction* to any creature.

Every attentive reader therefore of the word of God must needs see, and be forced to confess, that whensoever mention is made of the *destruction* of man, that very *destruction* implies that man is the cause of it; or, in other words, that man *destroys himself*, and his *destruction* cannot be chargeable on any but himself.

But this will more plainly appear if we consider the nature of man's *destruction*, as it is represented to us in the word of God.

Whensoever that holy book speaks of man's *destruction*, it always speaks of it in reference to his spiritual part, or his immortal soul, inasmuch as this part constitutes properly the *whole* of man; and the body, or corporeal part, is comparatively as *nothing*.

But in what doth the *destruction* of man's soul, or spirit, consist? How is this destruction effected? And what is its immediate cause?

Let us hearken to the same eternal source of truth and instruction. "If a man," saith the blessed Jesus, "abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is

withered ; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”

Behold here both the *nature* of man's *destruction*, and also the *cause* of it ! It consists solely in man's separation from the great Redeemer, by not abiding in him, and in the life and order which proceed from him ; and it is of consequence caused by man's abuse of the freedom which God has given him, in that he turns his heart and affections *from* God, instead of turning them *towards* God ; and thus takes up his abode *out of* God, instead of taking up his abode *in* God.

For as there is but one *life* or *salvation* for man, and as this one *life* or *salvation* consists in man's joining himself with God, by returning or re-entering with his will and affections into the life and order of God, according to those words of the great Saviour, “ Abide in me, and I in you :” so there is but one *death* or *destruction* also for man ; and this *death* or *destruction* consists, and must needs consist, in this one single circumstance alone, that man doth not return or re-enter into the blessed life and order of God, and thereby abide in the great Redeemer, as he was intended to do ; in which case, he must certainly cast himself into the regions of disorder ; and where disorder is, there God cannot be ; and where God cannot be, there neither can life or salvation be, and, of course, there must death and destruction be, with all their attendant miseries.

Behold here, then, the eternal reason why God cannot possibly, in any sense of the word, be the author

of man's destruction, and why man's destruction must needs in all cases be imputed to man himself.

For who cannot see, that God, in his infinite mercy, is ever, and ever must be, desirous to bless and save eternally all his creatures? Who cannot see, that with this view, and for this blessed purpose, he is ever striving to turn and draw all men to himself, that *they may abide in him, and he in them*, for everlasting blessing and salvation? Who therefore cannot see further, if he be so disposed, that no man can be destroyed possibly, but by his own fault; or, in other words, by his abusing his free-will, in not complying with the intentions and operations of God; in not drawing nigh unto God in his own mind, and abiding with him in the life and order which he hath established?

Nevertheless, though man's destruction thus cometh from himself, and not from God, yet it will of necessity *appear* to the destroyed man as if it came from God, and not from himself. This is the sure consequence of that evil, which leads man to destruction. For all evil is blind, and judges in all cases from *appearances*, and not according to truth and reality; and the appearance to an evil man must needs be, that God destroys him, in like manner as it appears to him, that God is angry and wroth with him; though in God there is no more of anger and wrath, than there is of destruction.

This then is the reason, why, in the Word of God, destruction is sometimes imputed to him, as well as wrath and anger. For the Word of God, in its letter,

is written according to the appearances in which man is ; inasmuch as, if it was not so written, man could not comprehend it, and therefore it would be of no use to him. Nevertheless, it is the part of true wisdom to draw aside the veil of those appearances, which cover the sacred realities of the eternal truth, and thus to enter into the bright light of the sanctuary, agreeable to those words of the Redeemer, "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

To conclude. Doth man's destruction, then, come from himself alone? Doth it consist in his separating his will and affections from God? Is the seed of destruction, therefore, contained in every perverted love, in every false desire, in every wrong inclination of the heart, which doth not originate in God, and tend towards God? What consideration can so forcibly press upon us the great necessity of attending continually to the hidden tendencies and workings of our own minds? The very idea, that it is possible for us to destroy ourselves, is of so awful and alarming a nature, that none but the most thoughtless and abandoned can surely be unaffected by it. And if *self-destruction* consists in living separate from God in heart and thought, what wise man will not be at the pains at least to ask himself, whether he be living or not in such a state of separation? If there be *destruction*, again, in attachments to perishable objects, in perverted and misplaced affections, in ways of life that are not agreeable to the life and order of God, and even in (what some people, alas! think safe and innocent) a trifling and vain

conversation, an indeterminate and unthinking carelessness about the things of God ; what wise man will not then inquire diligently, whether he is at any time wandering from God in such attachments, such affections, and such ways of life ? In short, if all *destruction* be nothing else but the *disorder* of our minds and lives, whilst we depart from God ; and if all *salvation* be nothing else but a *restoration of heavenly order* in our minds, whilst we return to God, and abide in him ; what thinking person will not then be led in all earnestness to guard against every possible disorder of mind and life, and to cherish and cultivate every principle of heaven and of order ? Who will not then pray continually, with the holy man of old, “ Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me ? ” AMEN.

THE
MARKS AND CHARACTERS
OF
A TRUE FAITH.

IN SIX SERMONS.

SERMON XXI.

St. Mark, xvi. 17, 18.

*And these Signs shall follow them that believe ;
in my NAME shall they cast out Devils ; they
shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take
up serpents ; and if they drink any deadly
thing, it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay
hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

IT was sound and sober advice of the Apostle to his
Corinthian brethren, "Examine yourselves whether
ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves."* Every
sincere Christian, who is in real earnest about his
salvation, will find himself frequently led to follow

* 2 Cor. xii. 5.

this advice. He will consider well whether he be a true believer, or not; he will know and perceive that there is the greatest danger of being mistaken in this matter; he will search out therefore all the marks, signs, and characters of a real faith; he will examine himself attentively by these marks, signs, and characters; thus he will endeavour to prove himself, whether he be a real, or only pretended disciple of Jesus Christ; for he will be taught, that at this day there are Christians so called of both these descriptions; and that it is no easy matter to distinguish between the one and the other: being impelled, however, with the most ardent desire to avoid all delusion in a matter of such infinite importance, and to be found in the number of the faithful and true servants of God, he will never rest till he hath separated between the true and the false, the real and the pretended, the sincere and the hypocritical, and thus come to a foundation of solid comfort in his own mind, by being established in a true gospel faith.

I trust, beloved, that in the number of those to whom I am now addressing myself, there are many who have been led to the above serious examination, and this from an earnest concern about their eternal peace. It is for the sake of such, that I have now chosen the words of my text, for the subject of our consideration, inasmuch as they contain a declaration, from the mouth of truth itself, of the indisputable marks, signs, and characters of a true faith. Every one, therefore, hath here a sure and certain standard whereby to ex-

examine himself; and every one, who will examine himself sincerely, may discover of a certainty whether he be a believer or not; whether he hath real faith, or hath only the name and appearance thereof.

“These signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”

But methinks I hear the carnal mind object—What! Is this the only mark and sign of true faith, to do all these miracles? Is it not possible to be a believer without working such wondrous works? The Apostles and first Christians had indeed this power, in and through the name of Jesus Christ, but was this power intended to be given unto Christians in all ages? Shall we at this day think of “casting out devils, of speaking with new tongues, of taking up serpents, of not being hurt by drinking deadly things, of restoring the sick to health and life?” Surely these signs of a true faith are not now to be looked for; they were intended only for the infant church of Christ; we have nothing to do with them, and our faith may still be true and saving, though it is not distinguished by any of the above characters.

I am well aware that such objections have been raised, and are still raised, against the signs of a true faith, pointed out in my text, as applied to Christians in later ages, and therefore before we proceed to con-

sider the nature of those signs, it may be expedient to say somewhat in answer to the above objections.

And first. Every serious considerate person will find a full and satisfactory answer to the above objections, in the decisive and peremptory manner in which our Lord expresses himself on the occasion. "These signs (says he) shall follow them that believe." Observe; in these words of our Lord there is no limitation of time or persons; he does not say, these signs shall follow my first disciples, those that first believe in my name; he does not say they shall be confined to the Apostles, or to the early ages of Christianity; but he says in general, "These signs shall follow them that believe;" by which is certainly implied, them that believe in all ages, in all times and places; for surely, if he had not meant this, he would have said so; he would have fixed a time when these signs should have ceased; he would have declared expressly, These signs shall follow the faith of such and such persons, during such and such a time, but then my followers are no longer to look for, or to expect them; then these signs shall cease. Our Lord, however, has fixed no such time; he has not confined these signs of a true belief to any particular set of persons, and therefore we must be forced to conclude, that he intended them to remain as everlasting signs and tests of faith, unto the remotest ages of his church.

But secondly—In the above objections it is urged, if these are to be considered as the signs of a true faith,

then every believer in Jesus Christ must be endued with the power of working miracles, and this surely the Lord could never intend to be any mark or character of a true faith.

To this I answer—If our faith be not a faith *capable of working miracles*, it is then no faith at all; it hath nothing at all divine in it; it is merely human, from ourselves, and not from God. Hereby therefore we may know and try our faith of what sort it is, whether it be from above or from beneath, from heaven or from ourselves. If it be from beneath, or from ourselves, it will have no miraculous virtue in it; but if it be from above, or, from heaven, that is, from the Lord of heaven; if it be a faith in and from the name of Jesus Christ, it will then assuredly be a *miracle-working* faith; it will do many wonderful works, and this as sure as there is truth in these words of the Lord, “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 unto my Father.”*

But it will be asked, what are these *miracles*? what are these *greater works*, which must be the fruits of a true faith in and from the Lord Jesus Christ?

The question is of unspeakable importance to every Christian. The answer to it is short, but if well attended to, will be found most edifying.

Miracles and *wondrous works* are considered in general only in relation to what is *bodily* or *material*,

* John xiv. 12.

and through a superficial attention, or rather indolent inattention to the true sense and meaning of what is *miraculous*, we are accustomed never to pronounce any thing a *miracle*, but when we observe some extraordinary change wrought in the *bodies* of men, or in the world of *matter*.

Thus we should think it a great miracle to see a blind man made to see, a lame man to walk, a deaf man to hear, a dumb man to speak, a dead man to live ; or to see a mountain raised from its foundation and cast into the sea, or to see the sea itself divided “ and the waters thereof standing on an heap,” as was the case when the Israelites went through the Red Sea on dry ground.

These, I say, we call great miracles and wondrous works ; and indeed so they are, and bear indisputable testimony to a divine supernatural power, without which they never could be wrought.

Let it, however, be well remembered, without any disparagement to these miracles wrought upon the *bodies* of men, and upon the *outward material* world, that there are also miracles, or wondrous works of another sort, viz. such as are wrought upon the *spirits of men*, and take place in what may be called man’s *spiritual world*.

As for example—if it be a great miracle that a man blind as to his *bodily* sight is made to see, it is surely a miracle equally great, that a man blind as to his *spiritual* sight is made to see ; the same is true of the lame, the deaf, the dumb, the dead ; the miracle

is equally great, whether performed upon those who fall under this description as to their *spirits*, or as to their *bodies*. So in respect to *removing mountains*, and *dividing the waters of the deep*; it is full as great a miracle and as wondrous a work, and as sure a proof of Omnipotence, to remove in man's heart the *mountains** of pride, of vanity, of self-love, and the love of the world; and to divide in him the waters of spiritual trouble, affliction, and temptation: † These I say are full as great and signal miracles as when done in a *natural* way, and are as sure indisputable signs of the power of God, without which it is not possible they should be effected.

From this view then of the real and true nature of miracles, it will appear plain to every considerate person, that all true faith, as being a divine gift, and attended therefore with a divine power, must needs be endued with a *miracle-working* virtue, and that, if it had not such a virtue in it, it could not be any blessing, or convey any real good unto the soul of man, inasmuch as nothing can be a blessing, or convey good to man, but what helps him to a change of nature, giving him new eyes, new ears, a new tongue, new feet, a new life, which cannot possibly be effected but by a supernatural and consequently miracle-working power from above.

* See Isaiah ii. 14. xli. 15. xlii. 15. Jerem. xlii. 16. Ezek. vi. 2, 3, xxxviii. 8, 20, Micah i. 4, vi. 1, 2. Hab. iii. 6, 13, and many others.

† See Isaiah xliii. 2. Lam. iii. 54. Psalm lxxix. 2, cxxiv. 4, 5, and other places.

Let it therefore no longer be imagined, that Christians at this day are not to look for a miraculous power as the *sign* and test of a true faith, for if we have not this *sign* and test, we cannot have a surer proof that our faith is not true ; if we have never yet “ cast out devils ;” if we have never yet “ spoke with new tongues ;” if we have never yet escaped “ hurt from drinking deadly things ;” if we have never yet “ laid hands on the sick, and they have recovered :” If, I say, we have never yet experienced the power of faith in and from the Lord Jesus Christ, in working these miracles in our own hearts and lives, (which are the real and most substantial miracles, and what our Lord calls *greater works* than what he himself did) we have then every reason in the world to be convinced that we are lacking in the true signs and characters of a Gospel faith.

I am well aware, that this idea of faith and its operations will be charged by some as tending to *enthusiasm* and *fanaticism*, and will be deemed a wild departure from the soberness of Gospel wisdom. This charge is to be expected from all those who have been accustomed to regard faith as a mere act of the understanding only, assenting to some particular system of doctrines and opinions, not as a divine power operating from the Fountain of heavenly life and love, and tending to form that life, and bring forth the blessed fruits of that love, in all who receive it and live accordingly.

But a like charge may, with equal reason, be urged against a belief in any of the great doctrines of the Gospel ; as in the doctrine of the purification, renewal, and regeneration of the human soul ; in the doctrine of the resurrection ; in the doctrine of the operation of divine grace on the minds of men ; all which imply a divine and heavenly-working power, and at the same time some marvellous and *miraculous* change, wrought thereby on the human spirit.

Let us not, then, be deterred by *names*, from acknowledging and holding fast by the *realities* of Gospel truth.

It may be deemed enthusiasm by some, to believe our Bibles, and that the Lord Jesus Christ is our God and Saviour ; but shall we, on that account, reject two such important articles of our faith ? In like manner, it may be deemed enthusiasm and fanaticism to call faith a *supernatural* power, and to expect from it *supernatural* effects ; but shall we, on this account, degrade our faith and its operations into what is merely natural and human ? Sound and sober reason surely requires, that we should rather labour to form to ourselves just notions of the extraordinary and divine excellence of this “gift of God”* to us ; remembering well, that we are exposed to far greater mischiefs by *lessening* the high value thereof, than by *over-rating* it ; and that it may tend alike to enthusiasm and fanaticism, to *believe too little*, as to *believe* (if such a thing can be) *too much*.

* Ephes. ii. 8.

A faith merely natural and speculative, composed of opinions and forms of words, and consisting merely in an assent of the understanding to some particular code of doctrinal tenets, but void of heavenly life and heavenly power, hath too long prevailed in the church, to the lamentable extirpation of all solid wisdom, piety, and good life. Many suffer infinite hurt by such a faith as this, and are betrayed by it into the most dangerous spirit of disorder, enthusiasm, and fanaticism, without suspecting its mischiefs. For enthusiasm, fanaticism, and every other disorder of the mind, it is well to be noted, take their rise either from some mistaken ideas of the nature of God, or from a defect of obedience to the commandments of God. They are the natural offspring either of a blind understanding or of a corrupt heart, or of both united. They can therefore only be remedied and removed by a *right faith*, and a conformity of life thereto.

Would we then avoid such enthusiasm, fanaticism, and every other disorder of heart and understanding, and attain to a true sobriety and purity of Gospel wisdom, let us ponder well the heavenly nature and operations of a right Gospel faith; let us be careful to acquire *just* ideas of its intrinsic and divine excellence; let us set no limits to its *marvellous* and *miraculous* power and efficacy, because no such limits are warranted in holy Scripture, which declares "all things possible to him that believeth."*

* Mark ix. 23.

For this happy purpose, let us now proceed to consider the genuine *signs*, marks, and characters, of an evangelical faith, as the Lord himself hath declared them unto us ; first praying most earnestly, and in all humility and contrition of heart, according to the spirit of that prevailing prayer of old, “ Lord, I believe ; *help* thou mine unbelief !”* and also of that of the apostles, “ Lord, *increase* our faith.”† AMEN.

* Mark ix. 24.

† Luke xvii. 5.



ON TRUE FAITH.

SERMON XXII.

St. Mark, xvi. 17, 18.

These Signs shall follow them that believe ; in my NAME shall they cast out Devils ; they shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take up serpents ; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

HAVING shewn in the preceding discourse on these words, that they were not intended to be confined to the *early* times of the Gospel, but are to be considered as an infallible mark and test of true faith amongst Christians in *all* ages and places, without exception, I shall now proceed to explain the nature of each particular *sign* here mentioned by our blessed Lord as characteristic of the true believer.

And first. “In my name shall they cast out devils.”

I am well aware that many at this day, who call themselves Christians, will think it strange to hear of

this *sign* of a true faith, and will be greatly surprised when they are told, that they cannot be real believers, unless in "the name of Jesus Christ they cast out devils."

This surprise and strangeness however can only be owing, either to their not having considered, or not having believed, the doctrine of the Word of God respecting *devils*; for when once this doctrine is rightly received and understood, it will then appear most plain and true, that every true believer in Jesus Christ must needs *in his name cast out devils*.

Before then we proceed to a farther explanation of the *sign* before us, it may be expedient to consider what the holy Scriptures teach us on this subject concerning *devils*.

Now we learn from the oracles of truth, that *devils* are wicked and lying spirits, who have their abodes in the kingdom of hell and darkness, where they live for ever separate from God in unutterable misery.

We learn further from the same source of truth, that these *devils*, or wicked spirits, are near unto man; that they have power to tempt and assault him; that they have their abode and delight in all man's evil affections; that therefore they dwell and unite themselves with all who live in evil! and that it is their greatest satisfaction (if we may call it a satisfaction) to defile and destroy the souls of men by leading them into sin, and turning their hearts and understandings from God and heaven.

Thus our Lord, in the parable of the tares of the field, represents the devil as sowing tares amongst the wheat; "the enemy (saith he) that sowed them is the

devil*;" by tares are here signified all wicked and false suggestions in the hearts of men; by wheat, all good, and holy influences of love and truth from Jesus Christ.

Again, in another place, he represents the devil as depriving man of the Word of divine truth whereby he should be saved—"then cometh the devil (saith he) and taketh the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved."† The word here is the holy truth of God, which the devil opposeth in man, because it is opposite to, and destructive of him, and his kingdom.

To the same purpose St. Peter represents the devil "walking about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;"‡ and St. Paul styles him "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience;"§ and accordingly St. John saith, that "whosoever committeth sin is of the devil;"|| and hence come various exhortations and admonitions, as where it is said, "Neither give place to the devil;"** and by another apostle, "resist the devil and he will flee from you."††

Agreeable to this testimony of holy scripture, our church teaches us to pray, that we may be delivered

* Mat. xiii.

† Luke, viii. 12.

‡ 1 Pet. v. 8.

§ Ephes. ii. 2.

|| 1 John, iii. 8.

** Ephes. iv. 27.

†† James, iv. 7.

“ from the craft and assaults of the devil ;” and in the office of baptism, when the child is signed with the sign of the cross, it is added, “ In token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil.”

From all this weight of evidence then we are plainly taught, not only who and what *devils* are, but also that there is a nearer communication between them and our hearts, than many of us are apt to imagine, inasmuch as from the above scriptures it is most evident, that they have power to assault us with their evil influences and false delusive persuasions ; they have power also to destroy us, if we do not watch against and resist them ; they have power finally to make us their children, by leading us to forget God, and to delight in evil as they themselves do.

This is a subject, alas ! which in general is little considered by many, who still profess to believe in the holy scriptures, and who join in the daily prayers of the church against the *craft and assaults of the devil*.

The case is, there is a mighty difference between receiving a doctrine, and giving a blind assent to it, on the testimony of others, and being convinced of it by a testimony in our own hearts, arising from a real and thorough persuasion of its truth, as we come to live by the practice of it.

Let me then, beloved, earnestly recommend to you, as a matter of the utmost importance to your eternal peace, no longer to receive this doctrine concerning *devils*, merely on the testimony of others, but to come

into a practical belief and conviction of it in your own hearts and lives. For this purpose let me counsel you to believe and consider well, that wherever *evil* is, there also the *devil* is, there also *hell* is; for whether we speak of *evil*, of *hell*, or the *devil*, it is the same thing, inasmuch as it is not possible they should ever be separated or put asunder. There cannot therefore be mentioned a single bad passion, lust, or affection of man's heart, but what is influenced by, and in connexion with, the *devil*, or the spirits of darkness. Are we proud? are we covetous? are we wrathful? are we sensual? are we impatient? do we hate and despise our neighbours? do we love ourselves better than others? do we love this world and the flesh better than God and his righteousness? are we envious, malicious, liars, adulterers, blasphemers, or the slaves of any other unchristian affection? We cannot have a surer proof, whilst we delight in such things, that our hearts are *one* with our great adversary, and that he dwelleth in us, and ruleth us by the spirit of his abominations.

From this scripture account then of the nature of devils, and of their near communication with man, it will appear plain to every considerate person, how *this sign followeth* all the believers in Jesus Christ, "in my name they shall cast out devils."

For it is an essential character of true Gospel faith, that *it worketh by love*;* and love, we are assured by our Lord, consisteth *in keeping the commandments*;†

* Galat. v. 6.

† John xiv. 21. 23.

and the great law of the commandments is, *to depart from evil* ;* and to depart from evil, is to depart from, to renounce, and to *cast out devils*, inasmuch as we have just now shewn, *evil* and the *devil* are *one*, and therefore if *evil* be cast out, by renouncing and departing from it, the *devil* must needs be cast out at the same time.

There is indeed what is by some called faith, (but it is to be much lamented that it is so called) which is not attended with this power of renouncing, rejecting, and casting out of *evil*, that is, the *devil* ; thus some say they have faith, and that they believe in Jesus Christ, who yet live in much sin and evil, never examining themselves concerning it, much less making opposition to it. It is greatly to be feared, there are many who call themselves Christians, who yet rest content with such a fruitless and dead faith as this ; who will name the holy name of Jesus Christ with their *lips*, and yet in their *hearts* and *lives* deny him, being lovers of themselves and of the world, despisers of others, living in divers vanities and false pleasures, the slaves of evil affections, being proud, covetous, wrathful, sensual, impatient, unmerciful, and the like ; giving hereby a melancholy proof, that they were never yet truly converted unto the *living* God, the Lord Jesus Christ, in their hearts, and that they therefore want the *sign* of a true faith as delivered by Jesus Christ, “ In my name shall they cast out devils.”

But, beloved, permit me to warn you most earnest-

* Job xxviii. 28. Psalm xxxiv. 13, 14.

ly against the folly, unprofitableness, and dangerous tendencies of such a faith as this. For this purpose consider well, and digest thoroughly in your hearts, this essential sign and character of a true and saving faith, "In my name they shall cast out devils." Learn to reduce this into practice: believe and be persuaded that *devils*, or evil spirits, dwell in every evil, lawless, and unsanctified affection and lust: make it habitual to you to examine yourselves, and search out in your hearts such lusts and affections; consider every desire and thought of your minds, whether it be according to the love of God and your neighbour, or contrary thereto; if it be contrary thereto, then assure yourselves it is from the *devil*, and that the spirits of darkness are therein: here then begin with setting up the *standard* of a divine faith; here enlist yourselves under the *banner* of Jesus Christ; here take unto you the *whole armour* of God; here approve yourselves faithful soldiers by *fighting the good fight of faith*; for by this will it be clearly seen whether your faith is of God and a true faith, or whether it is of yourselves only, that is, no faith at all.

If it be of yourselves only, it will leave you the slaves and servants of sin and concupiscence, and you will attain to no dominion over evil, because you will make no resistance thereto; but if it be of God, that is, of Jesus Christ, you will be enabled, through this *high and holy name*, to overcome all evil; you will gain the victory over every selfish, sensual, worldly, and sinful affection, that is contrary to the pure love

of the Lord and of your neighbour ; by charity you will conquer and *cast out* all malice and hatred, by humility you will *cast out* pride, by contentedness you will *cast out* covetousness, by meekness wrath, by mercy unmercifulness, by the love of God the love of yourselves and of this world ; you will thus *sit with* Jesus Christ *on his throne* ; you will have power and dominion from him over all your enemies ; you will in short *cast out devils*, and be convinced thereby to your everlasting comfort, that you are true *followers of the lamb* ; thus through the omnipotent power of him who loveth you, ye will be enabled sooner or later to join in this song of the ever blessed, “ Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.”*

And may the most merciful Lord, the great Creator, Redeemer, and Lover of the souls of men, give us all grace to examine well our hearts and lives concerning *this sign* of a true faith, that so we may make no mistakes in a matter of such importance to us.

* Rev. xiii. 10

ON TRUE FAITH.

SERMON XXIII.

St. Mark xvi. 17, 18.

These Signs shall follow them that believe : in my NAME they shall cast out Devils ; they shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take up serpents ; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

HAVING already shewn, in the two preceding discourses, how the signs of a true faith, here mentioned by our Lord, were intended to be applied to all Christians alike in all ages, and what is to be understood by the first sign, viz. *casting out devils* ; I shall now proceed to a consideration of the second sign, as signified in these words, “ *In my name they shall speak with new tongues.*”

I am well aware that this sign, like the foregoing, is considered by the generality of Christians at this day, as belonging only to the apostles, and first teachers of Christianity, who alone, as it is commonly supposed,

could *cast out devils*, and *speak with new tongues* ; but that this sign was intended as a distinguishing character of true faith amongst Christians of all ages, and therefore ought to be expected and looked for by all the followers of Jesus Christ, as a sure proof and test of their being his followers, will appear plainly from these two considerations :

First, What is here to be understood by a *new tongue* ; and

Secondly, How and why a true faith in Jesus Christ must of necessity lead every believer to *speak with a new tongue*.

First, then, let us inquire what is here to be understood by a *new tongue* ; and may the blessed Spirit of **Him** who signified to us this sign of a true faith, direct all our hearts and minds in this inquiry !

We find frequent mention made in holy Scripture, of a *new heart*, which man is said to receive by regeneration.

Few consider aright what is meant by this *new heart*, and yet there is nothing else wanting to make us see clearly what is meant by a *new tongue*.

For, as the *heart* of man becomes *new*, only by receiving and being formed by a *new spirit*, which is the spirit of love and charity from God, even so the *tongue* of man becomes *new*, by speaking from and according to a *new spirit*.

Every man's tongue, we well know, speaks from some inward spirit or principle, or other, in his heart, according to those words of the Lord, " Out of the

abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh."* If this spirit, or principle, then be that of the *old* or unregenerate man; if it be only according to this world and the flesh; if it hath never been brought into subjection to the Holy Spirit of God; the tongue in this case must needs be *unrenewed*, and may properly be called an *old tongue*, just as an unrenewed man is called an *old man*: but if the spirit or principle, from which the tongue speaks, be that of the *new* and regenerate man; if it be under the influence of love and charity, righteousness and truth from God; the tongue in this case must needs be a *renewed tongue*, and may properly be called a *new tongue*, just as a *renewed heart* is called a *new heart*.

Here, then, every enlightened eye will be enabled to see clearly what is meant by a *new tongue*. A *new tongue* is that which speaks from a *new heart*, and according to the spirit of a *new heart*. A *new tongue*, therefore, is that which speaks from God, and under the influence of a divine spirit from God, because a *new heart* is from God, and under the influence of his spirit: a *new tongue* again always speaks the truth, and nothing but the truth, because God is truth, and speaking from God, it must of necessity speak the truth: a *new tongue* again speaks no evil, because evil is contrary to God, and therefore the tongue which speaks from God, cannot possibly speak evil: a *new tongue* again always speaks with a view to edification, because

* Mark xii. 34.

speaking from a heart devoted to God and seeking his glory, it must ever be influenced by some good end and design in whatever it speaks : finally, a *new tongue* ever speaks the language of love and charity, of sound wisdom and discretion ; “ No corrupt communication proceedeth from it, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers ; ” it is ever obedient to the spirit of God in the heart ; it never speaks but from and according to the dictates of that spirit ; the tongue of the *old man*, we know, speaks according to and from the spirit of the old man, which is his own spirit, and not the Spirit of God ; but the tongue of the *new man*, which is the *new tongue*, speaks from and according to the spirit of the *new man*, which is the spirit of love and wisdom from God ; and therefore all its speech and language and words and discourse are *new*, partaking of a *new* spirit and a *new* quality from God. Let it not however here be understood as if the *new tongue* was always speaking about God and holy things ; for if occasion requires, it can speak about the things of this world, as well as the tongue of the old man ; but then herein is an essential difference between the *old tongue* and the *new tongue* ; the *old tongue* speaks about the things of this world from a worldly spirit, which is the love of this world ; whereas the *new tongue*, when it speaks about worldly things, speaks not in and from a worldly spirit, but from a *renewed spirit*, even that spirit which *overcometh the world*.

Having thus then considered what we are to understand by a *new tongue*, I shall now proceed to shew, secondly, how and why a true faith in Jesus Christ must of necessity lead every true believer to *speak with a new tongue*.

It has been already shewn, in a former discourse, how a true faith operates to *casting out devils*, that is, to the removing from the heart and life of man all those evils which are contrary to love and charity, by leading men to renounce and reject such evils.

A true faith then must of consequence lead every sincerè believer to speak with a *new tongue*, inasmuch as whoever sincerely renounces evil in his heart, because it is contrary to God and his neighbour, he receiveth a *new heart*, from God: and who oever hath a *new heart*, as we have just now seen, he must of necessity speak with a *new tongue*.

Let me entreat, beloved, with all possible earnestness, your most serious attention to this consideration.

The slightest knowledge of the gospel may serve to convince you, that you cannot be true believers unless you are *renewed* in the spirit of your hearts; and that you cannot be renewed in the spirit of your hearts, only so far as you search out and examine those evils in your hearts, which are contrary to the love of God and of your neighbour, and having discovered them, are sincere in renouncing them.

In such case, the Lord will create in you a *new heart*, and a *new tongue* will then follow of course; you will speak a *new speech*, a *new language*, *new words*,

and *new* discourse ; because you will ever speak from a *new heart*, that is, from a *new spirit* in your heart.

Behold here and adore the gracious designs of Jesus Christ and his gospel towards man !

Man's *tongue*, as well as his heart, is, in his fallen or natural state, exceedingly corrupt, inasmuch as it partakes of the corruptions of his heart : in the language of the Apostle, it is *set on fire of hell* ;* it is the servant of sin, of vanity, and concupiscence ; it is thus at enmity with God and his righteousness, and it is frequently the unhappy cause of separating man further from heaven : but no sooner does the spirit of Jesus Christ and his gospel enter the heart of the true believer, than it exerts its blessed influence immediately on the *tongue* also ; as it creates in man a *new heart*, so it helps him to speak a *new language* ; all his words are then words of love, of charity, of peace and righteousness ; his tongue is no longer *set on fire of hell*, but it is under the influence of the holy Spirit of God ; thus the enmity between God and the tongue is destroyed, and *man with his mouth glorifies God*, edifies his neighbour, and advances his own salvation.

Speech, language, or discourse, was intended as one of the noblest privileges of our natures ; as that which distinguishes us in a particular manner from the brutes ; it was designed to be a source of most delightful satisfactions ; we are hereby enabled to communi-

* St. James iii. 6.

cate our thoughts one to another for mutual entertainment and edification.

But let it well be remembered, that this privilege of our natures, so distinguishing and so important, may become a *curse* to us, as well as a blessing, if we are not careful to use it aright.

Our Lord hath intimated this to us in these most awful words, “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”* Oh! terrible declaration to all those who are careless about their *words*, from what ground and from what spirit they proceed! But oh! blessed and comfortable declaration to all those who are careful to examine well the spring and fountain of their speech, that so it may be brought under obedience to the Spirit of Jesus!

“By thy words thou shalt be justified.” It is the blessed privilege of the true believer, that he can thus speak words which *justify*, inasmuch as putting away all evil from his heart and life, he speaketh with a *new tongue* from a *new heart*, that is, from God; all his words therefore are words which *justify* him, that is, which tend to purify and make him more righteous in the sight of God; inasmuch as they come from God, and they lead him to God; they speak the glory of God; they are edifying to others; they are a source of infinite delight to himself; for having respect to God and the good of his neighbour in them, he finds in all his words an unction of heavenly peace and comfort to his own mind.

* Matt. xii. 37.

But it is otherwise with those who do not well examine and consider from what source or fountain their words proceed; of such it is awfully true, "By thy words thou shalt be condemned," inasmuch as speaking only from themselves and their own spirit, all their words, even though they be good and holy words, partake of the evil unregenerate spirit of their hearts, and thus separate them further from the purity and peace of the holy Spirit of God.

To conclude.—It is written in the Prophet, "In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan;"* and in another place, "Then will I turn to the people a pure language."† From these, and many other similar passages of scripture, we learn, that it is the great and blessed intent of God and religion to man, to enable him to speak a new *language*, or, as it is here called, the *language of Canaan*, and a *pure language*; or, as it is expressed in my text, "To speak with a new tongue."

This blessed end of the dispensations of God to man, was represented and confirmed by that memorable sign of *cloven fiery tongues* which appeared to and sat upon the Apostles at the day of Pentecost, whereby was signified, that under the administration and going forth of the power and spirit of the manifested JEHOVAH in the person of Jesus Christ, operating in the hearts of men, the *tongue* or *language* of man should partake of its divine efficacy, and should be a tongue

* Isaiah vi. 13.

† Zeph. iii. 9.

or language animated with the fire of heaven, that is, with an heavenly love and charity.

Oh! then that we were all diligent to fulfil this design of God and his holy religion to us, that so we might become partakers of all its blessedness! Oh! that for this purpose we did but seriously consider, whether we have this *sign* of a true faith; and as seriously lay to heart that we cannot possibly be true believers only so far as we have this sign, and begin thereby to speak, with *new tongues, the language of Canaan, the pure language!*

This *new tongue, this language of Canaan, this pure language*, we have already shewn, is from God, that is, from the grace and Spirit of God in the *new heart* of the sincere Christian. Do we wish then to speak with this *new tongue the language of Canaan, the pure language?* do we wish to know this *sign* of a true faith? do we wish thus to be *justified and not condemned by our words?* do we wish that all our words and discourse may be of God, and lead us to God? let us then follow this plain Gospel rule, and we cannot possibly any of us fail of this infinite blessedness; let us search out and put away from our hearts and lives that spirit of selfish and worldly love, which is opposite to the love of Jesus Christ and our neighbour; let us shun all sin as contrary to God and his commandments; let us believe in and apply to Jesus Christ as our God, and Redeemer, and Regenerator: let us form our lives by his Spirit: we shall then soon find our *tongues, our speech, and language* influenced thereby;

for having our hearts ever turned from ourselves to Jesus Christ, we shall soon find Jesus Christ and his love in our hearts; our hearts will thus become *new*, and ruled by a *new* spirit; and in proportion as our hearts are thus renewed, we shall attain to the infinite blessedness of speaking with *new tongues the language of Canaan*, and a *pure language*.

ON TRUE FAITH.

SERMON XXIV.

St. Mark xvi. 17, 18.

These Signs shall follow them that believe : in my NAME shall they cast out Devils ; they shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take up serpents ; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them : they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

HAVING already considered the two first signs of a true faith here spoken of, viz. *the casting out devils*, and the *speaking with new tongues*, I shall now proceed, as I proposed, to a consideration of the third sign, viz. *the taking up of serpents*, and shew how this sign ever follows the true believer in the name of the Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The nature and meaning of this sign cannot be known, unless it be understood, first, what is here meant by *serpents* ; and, secondly, what is meant by *taking up serpents*.

These two inquiries, then, shall be the subject of my present discourse ; and may the God of mercy, who giveth understanding, and who openeth the eyes of man *to see the wondrous things of his law*, open the eyes of all amongst us, that we may be enabled to discern herein that light of eternal life and truth, which may be profitable to our salvation !

Every serious and attentive reader of the holy Scripture must needs have observed, that the various principles, parts, and powers, which enter into the constitution of man, are in those holy records not only compared to various animals here on earth, but are also called by the names of such animals.

Thus our Lord himself is frequently called a *Lamb*, and *the Lamb of God*,* to denote his holy innocence : he is also called in other places a *Lion*,† to denote his great power and might. And thus all his true followers are called *sheep*, and also *lambs*,‡ to denote their purity, goodness, and innocence, which they receive from the Lord.

On the other hand, the devil, we find, who is of a nature opposite to the Lord and to innocence, is called a *bear* and a *wolf*,§ by reason of his continual desire

* See Isaiah xvi. 1 ; liii. 7. Jer xi 19. John i. 29 ; and the Revelations throughout.

† See Gen. xlix. 9, 10 Hosea v. 14 ; xiii. 7, 8. Rev. v. 5 ; x. 3.

‡ See Isaiah liii 6. Psalm lxxix. 13 ; c. 3. John x. throughout ; chap. xxi 15, 16, 17.

§ See Lam. iii. 10. Isaiah xi. 7. Amos v. 9. Jer. v. 6. John x. 12.

to destroy what is good : 'at other times, he is described by the names of poisonous and subtle animals, and is called a *serpent*, a *dragon*, an *adder*, and the like,* to denote his poisonous artifice and cunning subtlety, whereby he deceives and destroys men's souls.

In like manner, all wicked men, who may be called devils in human forms, are named by similar names with the devil himself. Thus John the Baptist, and also the Lord, call the Sadducees and Pharisees a *generation of vipers* ;† and thus, when our Lord speaks of Herod, who sought to kill him, he calls him *a fox* : “Go ye,” saith he to the Pharisees, “and tell *that fox*, Behold I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.”‡ Thus, also, the carnal and sensual are frequently named *dogs* : “Many *dogs*,” saith the Psalmist, “are come about me ;”§ speaking of his temptations and assaults from the wicked. “Beware of *dogs*,”|| saith the Apostle ; speaking of the sensual and carnal-minded, who opposed the purity of his doctrine. And in the Revelations, where mention is made of the holy city, the new Jerusalem, it is written, “Without are *dogs*, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and murderers,

* See Gen. iii. 1. 13. Psalm xci. 13 ; cxl. 2. Isaiah xxvii. f. Rev. xii. 3, 4. 7. 9. 13 ; and many places.

† Matt. iii. 7 ; xii. 34. Luke iii. 7.

‡ Luke xiii. 32.

§ Psalm xxii. 16.

|| Philip. iii. 2.

and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie ;”* where *dogs* denote those who immerse their affections in the delights of sense, or of the carnal nature.

Numberless other examples might here be adduced, would the time permit, of this method of speaking used in the holy Scriptures, or Word of God, whereby the spiritual principles, parts, and powers, which enter into the constitution of man, are not only compared to, but are also called by the names of such animals, as in their natures correspond to such principles, parts, and powers. Those, however, which have been already mentioned, will, I trust, be sufficient for our present purpose.

From this method of speaking, then, so familiar and common in the holy Scriptures, every enlightened eye will be enabled clearly to discern what we are to understand by *serpents* in the words of my text. The serpent, we all know, is an animal of a very *subtle* and *cunning* nature ; in many cases *poisonous* ; which is not elevated above the earth like other animals, but creeps or crawls on the ground, and hides itself in holes and clefts of the earth, from whence it frequently darts forth to the terror and destruction of man and other creatures.

Hence this animal most fitly denotes the *sensual man*, or the sensual part and principle in the life of man. For this sensual part or principle, we all know by experience, is of a very cunning and subtle nature,

* Rev. xii. 15.

deluding and deceiving man by appearances and false persuasions, as it is written of the serpent which tempted and deceived Eve, that “ he was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord had made ;” * it is also in many cases *poisonous*, infecting and destroying the spiritual or heavenly life in man ; it creeps likewise on the ground, is in close connexion with earthly and worldly things, delighting itself with them, immersing itself in them, and thence causing much terror, and often bringing destruction to man’s superior parts and principles, that is, to the inner man : thus its operations are still the same that they were in old time, in the days of our first parents, who were seduced hereby, and lost paradise ; it is ever tempting us to *eat of the forbidden fruit*, to forget God and his kingdom, to love this world only, and the things thereof, whereby it causeth in many of us also the loss of paradise.

But this signification of the word *serpent* will more plainly appear, if we proceed to consider, secondly, what is meant by *taking up serpents*.

From this expression, “ They shall take up *serpents*,” it must be very evident to every considerate and attentive mind, that our Lord, by *serpents*, could never mean real natural serpents, such as we see in this natural world ; for according to such meaning, what could be the signification of *taking up serpents* ? How could this be any sign of true faith ? What end could it possibly answer for any one to have this

* Gen. iii. 1.

sign? How few also would have it in their power to give this testimony of their faith? Besides, had the Lord here meant real *serpents*, he would surely rather have spoken of *treading them down*, or of escaping hurt from them, than of *taking them up*.

It must then needs be, that our Lord by *serpents* here meant to denote some part or principle in the life and constitution of man; and that it is the sensual part or principle which is here denoted by *serpents*, will be most manifest from a right consideration of our Lord's expression in relation thereto, "They shall take up serpents."

For to *take up* any thing signifies to elevate, to exalt, to raise from a lower to a higher state; *to take up*, in this sense, as applied to *real serpents*, can have little or no meaning; but when applied to what is signified by serpents, viz. *the sensual part or principle in the life of man*, it will then be found to have a meaning full of importance, full of holiness, worthy of God to dictate, worthy of man to receive, expressive of the real power of a divine faith, and therefore highly proper to be enumerated amongst the true signs and characters of such a faith.

"In my name they shall take up serpents."

May I beseech your most earnest attention to the meaning of this expression, *they shall take up*, as applied to the sensual part or principle of the life of man, signified by serpents!

It is the great end of the Gospel not to destroy the sensual principle in man, but to save and bless it, by

elevating, by exalting, by raising or *taking it up* through the influence of the spiritual principle; and this happy end is effected, when man submits his sensual part, with all its affections, to the rule and dominion of the spiritual part, and its affections.

We all know that man's life consists of many parts or principles; they may in general be divided into two; the *sensual* and the *spiritual*; the sensual is the lowest and outermost; the spiritual is the higher and innermost.

These two parts may be either divided or united; they are divided when man lives a sensual life *alone*, without living a spiritual life; they are united when man lives at the same time a spiritual life, and thereby hath rule and dominion over the sensual life; when they are divided, then the sensual life is hurtful, and brings destruction and condemnation to man, and is in this respect called a *serpent*, cunning and subtle, and poisonous, and creeping on the ground; but when they are united, that is, when spiritual life hath rule and pre-eminence over the sensual life, then the sensual life is no longer hurtful; its poison is taken away from it; its cunning and subtlety are made subservient to higher wisdom; it becomes beneficial and blessed to man; and in this case it may be said *to be taken up*, that is, to be elevated, exalted, and raised from a lower to a higher place.

As for example—The appetite for eating and drinking is a *sensual* appetite, appertaining to the sensual life of man; if this appetite be separated from what is

spiritual, it then becomes hurtful to man ; it renders man carnal and gluttonous ; it immerses his spirit in abominable filthy lusts ; it is thus a *poisonous serpent* which deceives and destroys man ; but if this appetite be placed under the rule and guidance of the spiritual principle in man ; if, according to the apostle's advice, man *eats and drinks to the glory of God* ; if he consults herein the dictates of sober reason and religion : in this case the appetite for eating and drinking is elevated, it is exalted, it is the serpent *taken up*, and thus it is no longer poisonous and prejudicial, but blessed and profitable unto man.

And what is here said of eating and drinking, may easily be applied to all the other sensual appetites, and is equally true concerning them : whensoever they are separated from what is spiritual, that is from the love and wisdom, the grace and Spirit of God ruling over them, directing, regulating, elevating, and blessing them, they are then hurtful and deadly ; they are then so many *serpents, dragons, and poisonous animals*, continually raising up their heads, shooting forth their fatal stings, and infecting with their deadly venom the spiritual and heavenly principles of man's internal and everlasting life : but whensoever on the contrary they are brought under the rule and dominion of spiritual life, that is, of the love and wisdom, the grace and Spirit of God in man, then their former evil state is totally reversed ; through the power of heavenly faith and love, they are then elevated ; they no longer look downwards towards the world and the flesh, but they

look upwards towards God and heaven; they are indeed still *serpents*, but then they are serpents *taken up*, serpents deprived of their poison; thus they declare and manifest in man the mighty power of Jesus Christ, and are continual signs and proofs of that power, inasmuch as none but Jesus Christ, through a divine faith in him, can thus raise them up, deprive them of their poison, and make them thereby profitable and blessed unto man.

To conclude. We read, in the book of Exodus, this remarkable relation concerning Moses, when he was expressing his doubts to the Lord respecting his testimony being received by the children of Israel: "They will not," saith he, "believe me; for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee. And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground: and he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail: and he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand."*

Behold here a confirming testimony of what hath been just now observed in relation to the power of a divine faith in taking up serpents! By the *rod* of Moses, is here signified the power of such a faith. By this *rod* becoming a *serpent* when it was *cast on the ground*, is signified, that when the divine power in

* Exod. iv. 1 to 5.

man is immersed and buried in things of this world and the flesh, it becomes merely sensual. By the *serpent* becoming a *rod again*, when Moses caught it by the tail, is signified, the *elevation* of the sensual principle through the power of a divine faith. Thus was it to be made known unto the children of Israel, that the Lord had appeared unto Moses, and that he was to lead them out of Egypt into the good land of Canaan.

May we also, beloved, seek for, and be convinced by the same *sign*, respecting our Moses, the Lord Jesus Christ, our great leader and deliverer from spiritual Egypt to the heavenly Canaan! *The rod is in his hand*; a divine power over us, and in us, to elevate us to himself, to raise up all our affections from things below, and to gather us into his kingdom. If we *cast this rod to the ground*; if we bury our affections merely in the things of time and sense, it will then become a *serpent*; we shall be mere *sensual* men, accursed, and separated from the divine presence, crawling on the ground, full of subtlety and of all deadly poison: But if we will *take up this serpent*; if we will suffer the sensual affections to be ruled and elevated by the spiritual; the *serpent* will then become a *rod again in our hands*, even a rod of divine power, by which we shall have dominion over the lower things of time and sense; *using, and yet not abusing them*.

Thus shall we be convinced of the power of our God, having this infallible *sign* of a true faith; and

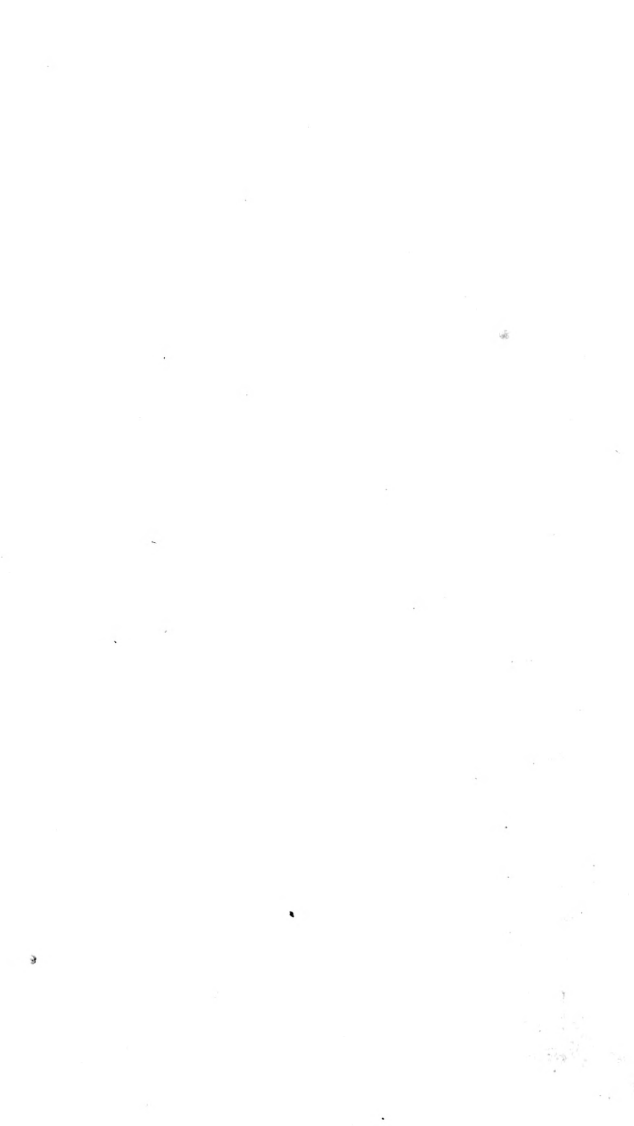
by blessed experience we shall be taught thus what was meant of old by the *brazen serpent*, which Moses was commanded to *lift up in the wilderness* ;* and also what was meant by *the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head* ;† and further, what our Lord meant, when he said to all his true disciples, “ Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents, and on scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy ; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”‡

For this purpose, may we consider well, whether the *serpent be taken up* in us, and become a *rod*, or whether we want this sign of a true faith ! And may we all be led, by such consideration, to humble ourselves, with all our affections, principles, and powers, more deeply before our God, that so we may be made sensible, in a more lively and blessed manner, of the elevating and exalting power of his pure and holy love and truth in us !

* Numb. xxi. 3, 9. John iii. 14.

† Gen. iii. 15.

‡ Luke x. 14.



ON TRUE FAITH.

SERMON XXV.

St. Mark, xvi. 17, 18.

These Signs shall follow them that believe; in my NAME shall they cast out Devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

WE have already considered the three first of these signs, viz. “the casting out devils, the speaking with new tongues, and the taking up serpents, and shewn how these signs in all ages, and with all people, have ever followed a true faith in the name of the Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ; we shall now proceed to consider, as was proposed, the *fourth* sign here pointed at by our blessed Lord, “If they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them,” and shew how *this sign is ever fulfilled in the true believer.*

None however can understand what is meant by this sign, unless it be first known what is meant here by *any deadly thing*, and by *drinking thereof*. May I therefore bespeak your serious attention, whilst I endeavour to explain to you the real meaning of these expressions ; and may I hope further that you will not fail to pray earnestly in your own minds for divine illumination herein, without which it will not be possible for you to comprehend the depth of that heavenly wisdom and instruction which the words before us contain !

It may seem, at first hearing, and to the merely natural mind it will continue to seem so, as if by the *deadly thing*, of which the Lord here speaks, nothing else was intended to be meant, but somewhat that brings death to the body, as all sorts of poisonous substances do ; and that a true faith was to prevent the fatal effect of such *natural* poisons.

But, beloved, permit me to intimate to you, that there are *deadly things* of another sort, besides those which affect the *body* ; there are *spiritual* as well as *natural* poisons ; and the *spiritual* life may be infected and destroyed by the one, as the *natural* life may be infected and destroyed by the other.

For as by the word *serpent*, according to what was shewn in a late discourse, is meant not only a *natural* serpent, in its outward natural form here on earth, but also a *spiritual* serpent, that is, some spiritual evil principle in man corresponding thereto ; so by the *deadly thing*, here spoken of by our Lord, is meant not only

natural poison, or that which affects the *body* of man, but also *spiritual* poison, or that which affects the spirit of man.

But it will be asked, “What is to be understood by *spiritual* poison? Every one understands well what *natural* poison is, by its terrible effects on the *body*; but has *spiritual* poison the same sensible and terrible effects on the *soul*? Can there be any *deadly thing* which can infect and destroy the spiritual life of man, as we see natural poison infects and destroys his natural life? If there be such a *deadly thing* existing, tell us, what is it, or what are we to understand by it, that so we may be on our guard against it?”

I am well aware, that many questions of this kind will be suggested, concerning that *spiritual deadly thing*, or that *spiritual* poison, of which we are speaking: they will however all of them find a full and satisfactory answer in our own minds, whensoever we do but rightly consider and apprehend the true nature of man's *spiritual* life, what it is, and in what it consists.

Whilst we think of man only in respect to his *bodily* life, we shall not be able to form an idea of any other sort of *deadly thing*, but what affects his *bodily* life; but if we would think of man in respect to his *spiritual* life, that is, the eternal life of his spirit; if we would consider and comprehend aright what this *spiritual* life is, and in what it consists, we should then see clearly, that it is subject to death also as well as the *bodily* life, and that whatever occasions its death is a *deadly thing*, a *spiritual* poison, so much more ter-

rible than any *natural poison*, as the loss of spiritual life is more to be dreaded than the loss of bodily life.

We should then also, in some measure, be enabled to apprehend the particular nature, qualities, and properties of such *spiritual poison*; we should perceive whence it originates, how it operates, and what is the proper and only *antidote* against it; we should see how all *natural poisons* have their birth and origin in this *spiritual poison*, and were intended to warn man of its fatal effects and consequences.

We should, in short, then plainly see into the full sense and meaning of this sign of a true faith as declared by the Lord, "If they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them;" for we should see, how the impenitent, the unconverted, and unbelieving, are for ever drinking *deadly things*, and are *hurt* thereby to the utter destruction of their immortal spirits; whereas the truly penitent, converted, and believing followers of Jesus Christ, in and through the power of his mighty name and heavenly Spirit guiding, governing, and preserving them, though *they drink of deadly things*, yet their immortal or spiritual life suffers no injury thereby.

Much might here be said, if occasion required, and if time would permit, concerning the origin, nature, malignancy, and variety of *spiritual deadly things*, or *poisons*; much more, possibly, than many would give credit to. At present, however, I shall beg leave to turn your attention to a remarkable expression here used by our Lord, in describing the *sign* under consi-

deration, which may serve to give us further light on this important subject.

It is observable, that our Lord, in describing this *sign*, makes no mention of *eating* any deadly thing; but only says, "If they *drink* any deadly thing." Now, if only mere *natural* poison was here to be understood, there can no reason be assigned, why mention should not have been made of *eating* as well as of *drinking*; inasmuch as we all know that man's *bodily life* may be poisoned and destroyed, as well by what he *eats*, as by what he *drinks*.

What considerate person, then, cannot here plainly see, that some lesson of deep instruction was intended by the Lord, and that this instruction must have relation to *spiritual deadly things*, or spiritual poison?

I shall endeavour to unfold to such as are desirous of apprehending and profiting by it, what this instruction is.

Every one who is at all acquainted with the nature of spiritual life, must needs know, that spiritual life requires its nourishment, that is, its *meat and drink*, as well as bodily life.

He may therefore further know, if he be so disposed, that spiritual life has its *hunger and thirst*, and *eats and drinks* as well as bodily life: and accordingly, much mention is made in holy Scripture of such spiritual *hunger and thirst*, as well as of such spiritual *eating and drinking*.*

* See particularly Matt. v. 6. Luke vii. 21; and John vi. throughout.

But though all this be known, or be easy to be known, yet few consider what constitutes the real difference between *spiritual eating* and *spiritual drinking*, or in what they are distinguished; and yet this is of importance also to be known.

Now spiritual eating hath respect to the *will principle* in man: spiritual drinking hath respect to the principle of the *understanding*. We all know, that man's mind consists of these two parts or principles: but then we do not enough consider what is the proper food and nourishment of each; how the one *hungers*, the other *thirsts*; the one *eats*, the other *drinks*; the one receives continually *spiritual meat*, whilst the other as constantly receives *spiritual drink*.

It will be sufficient, however, for our present purpose to know, that *drinking* hath respect to the principle of the understanding in man; and therefore, when our Lord said, "If they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them," he meant to allude to the *deadly poisonous things*, which affect man's understanding.

Suffer me, by way of conclusion, to press upon you the important signification of this *sign of a true faith*, according to the sense of the expressions thus opened and explained.

Deadly things, we have already shewn, are all such things as tend to destroy spiritual life in man. Spiritual life is love towards the Lord Jesus Christ, and towards one another, operating in all good thoughts, words, and works. To *drink deadly things*, then, is to imbibe or receive those false principles and persuas-

sions of evil in our understandings, which are opposite to and destructive of such spiritual life. These false principles and persuasions are many and various, being continually suggested to the mind, under an infinity of forms, by the devil, the world, and the flesh. If man could see how he is ever beset by them, and what danger he is in from them, he would be all astonishment. For they encompass him about on every side : they are the *bees* of the Psalmist, of which he says, " They came about me like bees : " * they are also the *locusts*, which St. John saw " ascending from the bottomless pit. " † Solitude itself is no security against them ; and yet, in society, and in conversation, they generally abound most. Bad books are full of them ; and in reading such books, we *dwell as among scorpions* : and yet there is no book so good, but, if we are not watchful, we may incur danger herein. Even the holy Scriptures themselves have been, and may be so perverted, as to become instruments of begetting the *deadly things*, whilst the corrupt mind of man hath collected and doth still collect thence *false doctrines* and mistaken principles to his destruction. What shall I say more ? The church of Christ itself is not free from the *fatal poison* ; for even in the church, tenets and opinions are often taught and circulated, contrary to the truth, and highly prejudicial to the spiritual life of man.

* Psalm cxviii. 12.

† Rev. ix. 3.

Herein, however, is a remarkable difference, well to be attended to, in regard to the effect of these *deadly poisonous things* on different persons. The impenitent and unconverted, who live merely to themselves and the world, without any concern about their spiritual life; these all *drink* greedily of the *deadly poison*; they receive it into the very essence of their life; it there diffuses its fatal influences; it infects and destroys, by degrees, all the principles of the life of heaven, which is the true love of God and of their neighbour; it is to them what the Psalmist calls *the poison of asps*:* they become dead thereby to all true life, and live merely a sensual, selfish, and worldly life, which, in the language of holy Scripture, is *spiritual death*;† and thus, for want of a true faith in Jesus Christ, they are hurt by the *deadly thing* to the utter destruction of the soul and spirit.

But it is otherwise with those blessed ones, who, by virtue of a true repentance and conversion to the God of heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, have their minds ever open to his salutary influences, and experience the preserving and healing power of his Spirit in their own hearts and lives. If these even *drink the deadly thing, it doth not hurt them*. All false principles and persuasions which have admittance to their minds, all false doctrines, all false opinions, even though received for a time, yet lose their poisonous qualities, and are soon cast out again. Such true believers are they

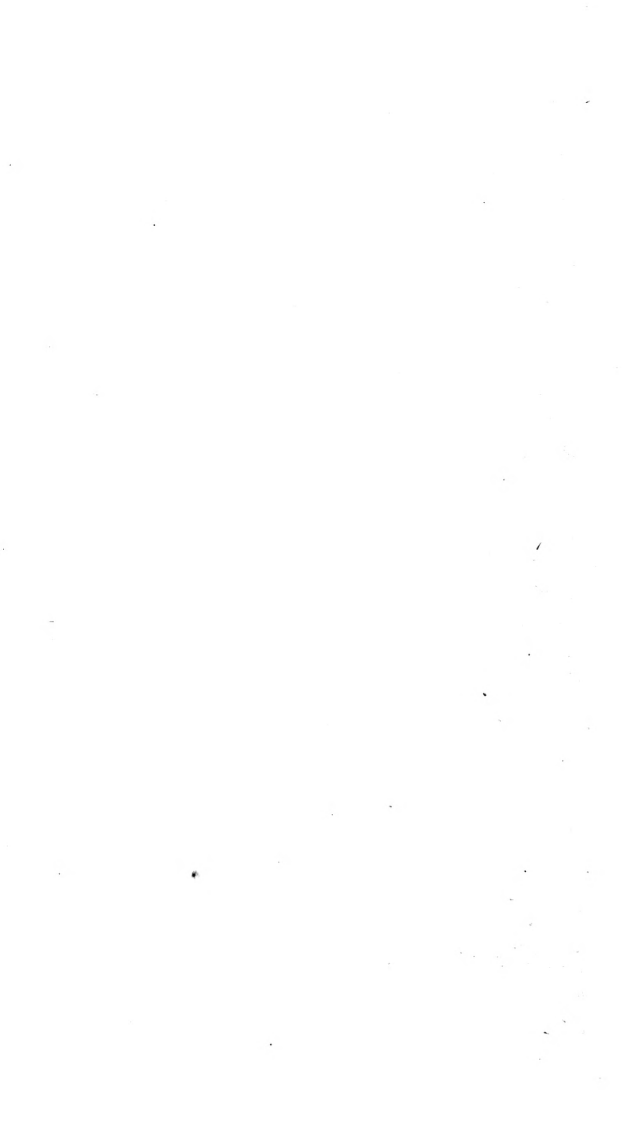
* Psalm cxl. 3.

† Rom. iii. 15.

whom the prophet calls the “sucking child, which should play on the hole of the asp; and the weaned child, which should put his hand on the cockatrice den.”* For, having their souls ever open, by a true faith and good life, to the light of truth, which is the light of the love and mercy of Jesus Christ, and framing their lives accordingly, they *have the seal of God in their foreheads*; and thus are preserved, by virtue of that seal, against all the power of the wicked one.

May we then labour, beloved, to experience the salutary influence of such a right evangelical faith! May we labour to possess this true sign of a true belief in the holy and high name of our God, the Lord Jesus Christ! For this purpose, may we be careful to come to this our God, in the spirit of a true repentance, and sincere searching out and departing from all evil of iniquity, which is the love of ourselves, of this world, and the flesh! Our Lord doth not say, *if they eat any deadly thing*, it shall not hurt them; because, *to eat the deadly thing*, is to *love and live* in sin; and this must needs *hurt every one*, inasmuch as sin destroys all spiritual life; and no one who lives in sin, can possibly be a true believer. May we then, in sincerity, put away all sin, looking unto the manifested God the Redeemer, Jesus Christ; and then we shall soon experience all the comforts of this sign of our faith, “If they drink any deadly thing,” &c.

* Isaiah xi. 8.



ON TRUE FAITH.

SERMON XXVI.

St. Mark, xvi. 17, 18.

These Signs shall follow them that believe ; in my NAME shall they cast out Devils ; they shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take up serpents ; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

IN the preceding discourses on these words, it has been already shewn what is to be understood by the four first of these signs, and how in all ages, and with all persons, they ever attend, and are expressive of, a true faith in the name of the Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

If what was said concerning those four first signs, has been well considered and digested, the nature, meaning, and import of the fifth and last sign will thence plainly appear, and it will be clearly seen,

how, in the name of the same Lord and Saviour, the true believer will “lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”

Whilst we look no deeper into the holy Word of God than the outward letter, and discern no higher life in man than the life of flesh and blood, we shall naturally be led to suppose, that by the *sick* here spoken of, our blessed Lord meant only the sick in body, and that by laying hands on them and their consequent recovery, he intended only to point out the efficacy of his power in curing bodily disorders.

But if our eyes were opened to see through the veil of the *letter* into the *spirit* of the holy Scriptures; if at the same time we are enabled to discern in ourselves a better and higher principle of life than that of mere flesh and blood, even the immortal and most precious life of our souls or spirits; we should be capable of apprehending, that when our Lord said of true believers, “They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover,” he designed to point out to us a power which should serve nobler ends, and accomplish higher purposes, than that of curing the infirmities of mere bodily life only.

We should then see clearly what is here meant *by laying on of hands*; what *by the sick*; and what *by their recovery*; and this sight would be exceedingly blessed to us, and would tend to quicken and strengthen our faith in that holy God and Saviour, who thus continually works mighty signs and wonders in all those that truly believe in his great and holy name. May

all our eyes then be now opened to see into the true spirit and meaning of God's holy Word ! May they be further opened to discern in ourselves that hidden but invaluable life of our spirits, which is infinitely above the perishable life of flesh and blood ! May we thus be prepared to consider and apprehend the true sense of this last sign of a real Gospel faith, " They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

And first, may we rightly consider and apprehend what is here meant by *laying on of hands*!—This has been a *sign* in all ages to denote a communication of virtue and power ; thus our Lord and his Apostles used this sign continually both in blessing the bodies and the souls of men ; they *laid their hands* on some, and they were healed of bodily diseases ; they *laid their hands* on others, and *they received the Holy Ghost*, and were cured of spiritual diseases.

By the sign then of *laying on of hands*, as applied to a true faith, is meant, a communication thereby of divine virtue and power from the great *Omnipotent*, the Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is the blessed privilege of the true believer, that he enjoys continually such a communication : his faith is a divine principle in him derived from the great redeeming God, and ascending again up to that God, and operating in conformity to his laws : it keeps open therefore the door of his heart ever towards God ; all holy and heavenly influences enter daily and hourly at that door ; and in this sacred communion he discovers the true source of all human power and virtue : a power of his

own, a virtue self-derived, he here discovers are things of no value in the sight of God : his faith therefore operates in the name of Jesus Christ alone, and he refers all power, all virtue, and all excellency to this their only true and proper source : thus does the true believer fulfil this sign of *laying on of hands* in the name of Jesus Christ.

But for what ends is this divine power received, or what is this *laying on of hands* to effect? We are presently informed, “ They shall lay hands on the sick.” By the sick, it is very plain, are here meant, not only the bodily, but the *spiritually sick*, or such as are diseased in their souls through sin : our blessed Lord and his Apostles did indeed cure the *bodily* diseases of men, by the *laying on of hands* ; but then it is well to be observed, that the cure of bodily diseases was only intended as an *external* sign and proof of that internal power and virtue, opened in and through the great Redeemer, which was to cure the diseases of the soul ; and every enlightened eye will regard it according to this its real and heavenly intention.

But it may be asked, “ What are the diseases of the soul, and who are the spiritually sick?—Alas ! can we any of us be ignorant of this? Have we never examined our own hearts and lives? Did we never discover by such examination the symptoms of spiritual disease and malady? Are all the powers and principles of life, in all their several degrees, sound, perfect, and vigorous in us? Do we love the great and holy God as freely, as purely, and as effectually, as we

ought to love him? Do we love our neighbours as ourselves, and shew forth this our love in deed and operation? Do we find no obstructions to this love and its fruits? No selfish affections, no worldly interests, no carnal concupiscencies, that thwart, pervert, or defile the love of heaven? Surely none can have examined himself sincerely herein, but he must have found that all is not right with him; he must therefore have discovered the root of *disorder*; he must be forced to see and confess, that both himself and all mankind are by nature spiritually *sick*, and can only be restored to health by the *laying on of the hands* of a true and effectual faith in Jesus Christ.

Behold here then a further *sign* and character of a true believer in the name of the Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ! He hath not only communication with heaven, that is, with the God of heaven, by virtue of heavenly faith in Jesus Christ, but he also applies this communication, and the powers and influences thereby bestowed, to the state of his own soul; he rectifies by it all the principles of his life in their several degrees; he examines into the nature and kind of all his disorders, that is, his departures from heavenly order and uprightness; he applies medicines to each, according to their several necessities; he strengthens what is weak; he purges and separates what is impure; he cuts off what is unsound; in short, bringing his whole life into conformity to the laws of Jesus Christ, which are the laws of heaven and heavenly order, he draws down the healing virtues

thereof into his own soul, and his own life, and thus gives a sure infallible proof and sign of his faith by “laying hands on the sick.”

But this is not all—Did the believer’s faith do no more than open communication with heaven, and draw down the healing virtues thereof, and apply them to his spiritual disorders, without effecting a cure, it would in this case be a fruitless and imperfect faith; leaving him as it found him, a poor, infirm, diseased, and sickly being. Too many, alas! amongst those who call themselves Christians are in this state; they look up to heaven at times for divine virtue and power; they receive medicines for the removal of all their disorders; but then they do not so use and apply those medicines as to render them effectual; they mix other things with them, which counteract and oppose their healing operation; just as in the case of bodily disorders, we see people sometimes take physic, who disappoint all the good effects thereof by an indiscreet mixture of other and contrary things with it, or by irregularity of life.

Not so the true and sincere believer in Jesus Christ: in him is fulfilled this sign in all its fulness, “He shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” He does not rest satisfied with opening the communication between God and his own soul, and applying the healing medicines of the Gospel to cure his disorders, but he is careful that those medicines may have their full effect; that they may operate to his *entire recovery* of the health, strength,

and perfection of a divine life ; that his love to God and his neighbour may be sound, constant, regular, cheerful, active, fruitful, and operative ; that all hindrances may be removed, all sources of malady and disease extirpated, which tend to weaken, to disorder, or to pervert the influences of heaven and heavenly life : in applying therefore these medicines, he takes good heed not to mix therewith any thing which may disturb their salutary operations ; he observes such rules of spiritual sobriety, order, cleanliness, separation, and regularity, as may ensure success to his applications ; he knows that the healing grace and mercy of Jesus Christ has such a power and virtue in it, that nothing can prevent its efficacy, if it be suffered to operate freely and fully ; but he knows also, that notwithstanding such power and virtue of divine grace, its efficacy may be retarded, if not totally perverted and prevented, by the indiscretion of man ; these considerations, at the same time that they teach him to place the fullest confidence in God, teach him also to be very watchful and circumspect over himself ; and thus, he applies the gospel remedies, and he applies them successfully ; he “ lays hands on the sick, and they recover.”

Oh blessed privilege of a true faith, which is thus operative to the removal of all disease and disorder of soul, and to its full recovery and establishment in a divine and heavenly life ! Oh happy believer, who is thus enabled to hold intercourse with heaven, to draw down thence heavenly virtue and power, and to recover thereby the sound and perfect image, life, and like-

ness of heaven, to the utter extirpation of the disordered image, life, and likeness of vanity and ungodliness! Oh most holy and all-powerful virtue, flowing continually from the heavenly humanity of the glorified Redeemer, the blessed Jesus, which is thus given forth for *the healing of the nations*, and the restoration of health, and strength, and peace unto the people!—Grant, O merciful God, to us thy sinful children, the true wisdom, to apply to Thee sincerely, constantly, and effectually, for this thine healing virtue. May our hearts be ever open to the reception thereof? May we be enlightened to see and apprehend our great need of it, from a conviction of our manifold disorders! And may this conviction lead us to use the blessed medicine, that we may never by our irregularities pervert its efficacy, but by the order and sobriety of our lives may so cherish and assist its influence, that it may work to our perfect and final recovery from all sickness, to the health, strength, and comfort of an heavenly life! AMEN.

THE END.

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