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REV. S. P. WILLIAMS.

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# SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS, CHIEFLY PRACTICAL.

BY SAMUEL PORTER WILLIAMS,  
LATE PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN  
NEWBURYPORT, MASS.

TOGETHER WITH A SKETCH

OF

THE AUTHOR'S LIFE AND CHARACTER.

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SALEM:

PRINTED AT THE ESSEX REGISTER OFFICE.

1827.

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*District of Massachusetts, to wit :*

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BE it remembered, that on the second day of June, A. D. 1827, in the fifty-first year of the Independence of the United States of America, WILLIAM WILLIAMS, of said district, has deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words following, to wit :—

“ Sermons on Various Subjects, Chiefly Practical. By SAMUEL PORTER WILLIAMS, late Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Newburyport, Mass. Together with a Sketch of the Author's Life and Character.”

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## ADVERTISEMENT.



THE reader of these Discourses should remember that they are posthumous ; and therefore written without the remotest prospect of publication. Every one acquainted with literary labors, knows that an Author is desirous to give his productions the finishing stroke ; the last polish of the file ; without which they can hardly be considered as specimens of his doctrinal sentiments or his abilities. In selecting these Sermons from a very large mass, (a monument of the Author's industry) we have prescribed to ourselves these rules :—we have endeavoured to select those subjects, not exhausted by previous writers ; to present truths, which, if not absolutely original, need to be more thoroughly and solemnly recommended to the reader's notice ; and we have had some reference likewise to the Author's genius and manner. His style is redundant and flowing, full of amplification and illustrations ; and on themes which needed this he was peculiarly excellent. Doctrinal subjects have been avoided ; not because the writer was not bold in avowing his sentiments, but because the Divines of New England have been abundant in discussions of this kind. We have considered the wants of the church, and endeavored, in some measure at least, to meet them. These principles have governed us in the selection ; and they are here stat-

ed, because they account for the miscellaneous character, and immethodical arrangement of the volume.

Let the reader remember that this volume is the preaching of the dead. The tomb is now the Preacher's pulpit, and his audience are those who are hastening to the tomb. All praise or censure, for faults or merits merely literary, are now to him empty sounds. But a tear of penitence dropped on these pages, or a desire for christian improvement begotten by their perusal, may increase his felicity even in the realms of bliss.

LEONARD WITHINGTON,  
WILLIAM WILLIAMS,

Salem, June 1, 1827.

# CONTENTS.



Biographical Sketch of the Author. ix

## SERMON I.

A Compendium of the Gospel.

MARK XVI. 15.—*Preach the Gospel to every creature.* 1

## SERMON II.

Estimate of the World's Morality.

MARK X. 21.—*Jesus beholding him, loved him; and said unto him, One thing thou lackest.* 13

## SERMON III.

Obedience Essential to Salvation.

REVELATION XXII. 14.—*Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.* 27

## SERMON IV.

Experimental Religion Vindicated.

PSALM LXVI. 16.—*Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.* 43

## SERMON V.

Every Man's Business.

1 THESSALONIANS IV. 11.—*But we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more, and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.* 57

## CONTENTS.

## SERMON VI.

A Funeral Sermon on the Living.

- PSALM XLIX. 17.—*When he dieth he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him.* . . . 69

## SERMON VII.

Christian Diligence.

- HEBREWS VI. 11, 12.—*And we desire—that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* . . . . . 81

## SERMON VIII.

Modesty of Apparel.

- 1 TIMOTHY II. 8, 9.—*I will—that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shame-facedness and sobriety.* . . . . . 96

## SERMON IX.

The Duty of Confessing Christ.

- MATTHEW X. 32, 33.—*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.* . . . . . 116

## SERMON X.

The Christian Race.

- HEBREWS XII. 1.—*Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus.* . . . . . 132

## SERMON XI.

The Christian Pilgrim.

PSALM XXXIX. 12.—*For I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.* . . . . . 149

## SERMON XII.

The only proper object of Solitude.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 5, 6, 7.—*Be careful for nothing : but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God ; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.* . . . . . 163

## SERMON XIII.

Christian Exultation.

GALATIANS VI. 14.—*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* . . . . . 177

## SERMON XIV.

The Mount of Refuge.

GENESIS XIX. 17.—*Escape for thy life—look not behind thee—neither tarry thou in all the plain. Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.* . . . . . 195

## SERMON XV.

Vindictive Justice Incompatible with Charity.

ROMANS XII. 19.—*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but give place unto wrath : for it is written—Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.* . . . . . 207

## SERMON XVI.

The Guilt and Danger of Scandalizing Souls.

LUKE XVII. 1, 2.—*Then said he unto the disciples, it is impossible but that offences will come : but wo unto him by whom they come ! It were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.* 225

## SERMON XVII.

The Nature of Gracious Compassion.

LUKE XIX. 41.—*And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.* . . . . 242

## SERMON XVIII.

The Kingdom of Christ.

JOHN XVIII. 36.—*My kingdom is not of this world.* 257

## SERMON XIX.

Acquiescence in the Will of God.

JOB XXXIV. 33.—*Should it be according to thy mind ?* 274

## SERMON XX.

The Value of Life.

ISAIAH XXXVIII. 18, 19, 20.—*The grave cannot praise thee ; death cannot celebrate thee ; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth : the living, the living, he shall praise thee as I do this day ; the father to the children shall make known thy truth. The Lord was ready to save me ; therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord.* . . . 286

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE.



THE Rev. SAMUEL P. WILLIAMS was born in Wethersfield, Connecticut, Feb. 22, 1779. His family was respectable; descended from some of the most celebrated divines New England has produced. The venerable Stoddard, who preceded Jonathan Edwards at Northampton, was his great grand-father on the mother's side. William Williams, whose name is found on the controversial pages of Edwards, was his paternal great grand-father. The race may almost claim an hereditary alliance with the sacred desk.

He was early destined to a literary life. He entered Yale College in the year 1792; at the age of 13; an age too early to reap the benefits of such an institution. There is a culpable ambition in some parents to crowd a child along faster than his powers will admit. Such a scholar, finding his strength not equal to the competition with which he is surrounded, naturally surrenders himself to idleness, and too often to vice. It does not appear that young Williams was ever vicious; but he reflects on his time in College in the language of se-

vere self-condemnation. “ My Collegiate life is past, and with it four years of ——. I have forever to mourn the neglect of their precious advantages. Time, expectation, money, all squandered. I resolve to redeem that which is lost.”

He was graduated in 1796 ; and was for some time engaged in mercantile employments. These years passed without any special regard to religion. He was a man of too much frankness and honesty to be successful in the scramble for riches. He hated dissembling more than he loved his interest. By what particular circumstances he was first led to serious reflection, we have no means of knowing. It appears from his papers that in March 1803 he became a communicant ; and that he entered into his covenant engagements with the humility of a penitent sinner ; and the hopes of a believer in Christ.

His attention was now turned toward the study of Theology. He pursued his studies first in New Haven under the direction of Dr. Dwight ; and afterwards at Springfield, with Dr. Howard to whom he was related. He was licensed at West Springfield, April 10th, 1805 ; preached his first Sermon at Amherst the next month ; and soon received an invitation from Springfield, the place of his studies, to settle as a Colleague with his instructor.

In Springfield many of the people differed from him in their religious tenets ; and therefore this invitation must be considered as very honorable to

his abilities as a preacher. The settlement however never took place.

He was already under two invitations, from other places—Deerfield in Mass. and Mansfield in Conn. At Deerfield there was great unanimity; Mansfield was in a broken state, and, had he consulted his own ease, it seemed as if he would have chosen the former place. He decided however on going to Mansfield; in which place he was ordained January 1st, 1807. The Sermon was preached by Doctor Parsons of Amherst.

The Church and parish in Mansfield had been distracted by controversy. Their former pastor had left the Orthodox faith to embrace Unitarianism—and it was in the hope of being a healer of breaches without betraying the truth, that Mr. Williams went among them. A minority in the church were avowed Unitarians; but consented to the settlement of Mr. Williams, on receiving a pledge from the whole body, that they should retain their sentiments without being excluded from the communion. Such was the ferment in which he found the place, occasioned by these discussions, that for two years he omitted preaching on these tender points. In a man of his talents and temperament, consenting to such an omission was remarkable. It shewed that he had prudence as well as zeal; and, although on all occasions it was natural for him to utter truth, he could for a time withhold it, when the utterance would produce no beneficial effect.

But as soon as the effervescence had subsided, Mr. Williams began to think it important that no part of the Gospel, which he deemed essential, should be concealed. He therefore laboured to convince his people of the proper Deity of Christ; of his atonement; and of the new coloring and influence which all the rays of the Gospel must assume by radiating from so central a point. This instead of producing conviction, was tearing open old wounds; it was the origin of difficulties which finally ended in his separation from his people.

It will not be necessary to present in detail all the circumstances which led to his departure from Mansfield. It was not merely a theological difference; the people were negligent in affording him sufficient support. He had an increasing family; and money after his ordination had depreciated in value. His nominal salary was therefore really less than at first. He remonstrated with his people and related his difficulties; but without effect. His ministry was closed in Mansfield, September 7th, 1807; in which place he had preached nine hundred sermons.

There is a scrupulous delicacy expected and required of a Clergyman in all pecuniary transactions, by some people, who having little generosity themselves, resolve that their religious teachers shall be generous to excess. But surely it is not unworthy of those who preach, and who are animated by the most disinterested virtue, to remember that usefulness cannot be continued without life,

nor life supported without bread. In all concerns, men should in the outset understand each other ; and the preacher who from real, or affected delicacy, neglects at his settlement to demand explicitness in the contract, will suffer for it in the end. If a preacher is an example to the flock, he must provide for his family.

Previous to his removal from Mansfield, Mr. Williams received invitations from some of the most respectable churches in our largest cities, to preach to them with a view to settlement ;—a sufficient proof of his reputation as a preacher.

After spending two years at Northampton, where his labours were peculiarly blessed ; he was invited to Newburyport, December, 1820, to preach in the pulpit then made vacant by the removal of Dr. Dana to the presidency of Dartmouth College. In this region, the peculiarly favourable impression made by his first discourses will be long remembered. He received an unanimous invitation to become pastor of the first Presbyterian church ; and was installed February 8th, 1821.

During the few years that he continued among us, he left, on the minds of all, the impression of possessing the character of an ardent friend to truth, a faithful minister, and an honest and independent man. His labours in the ministry were abundant ; and his success though gradual was great. He paid particular attention to the young ; and endeavoured to warn, reprove and rebuke with all long-suffering and doctrine. His melodious

voice always won the ear; his ornamental language gratified the fancy; and his pungent doctrine reached the heart. Under his ministry many were added to the church; and many more brought to a knowledge of the truth.

Though a very active man, and having all the appearance of health and vigour, he had long been troubled with dyspepsical complaints. He had several times been taken from his labours by sickness previous to the final attack of his disease. During the last year of his ministry he was very feeble. His last public performance was to preach the thanksgiving sermon of 1826, on THE VALUE OF LIFE. He expired December 23d of the same year; leaving a widow and a numerous family of children, the fruit of two marriages, to mourn his departure.—*ut bonis comis, ita adversus malos injucundus: ceterum ex iracundia nihil supererat. Secretum et silentium ejus non timeres; honestius putabat offendere, quam odisse.*

His funeral Sermon was preached by Mr. Withington, from which the following extract may serve for his moral portrait. The text was II Cor. v, 7. The subject, *The influence of faith, in the calamities of life.*

— “ The subject has been suggested by the departure of one who was himself eminently a man of faith; and whose closing scene exhibited its supporting power. In speaking of the character of the Rev. Mr. Williams, I feel myself in very

little danger of being subject to the charge of heaping unmerited praise on the dead. The lines of his character were strongly marked; every feature of his mind was bold and prominent. It needs no discriminating pencil to draw his likeness; and in speaking of his merits, I shall be more confident, because I shall say nothing, which will not be assented to by every friend and every foe. The quality which first struck the observer, was the perfect transparency of his purposes; every word and gesture seemed to say—Here is a man, who is above all disguise. His heart was not left lurking in the folds of impenetrable concealment; but it was in his face, and on his tongue; and seemed to challenge the observer to acknowledge his merits, and estimate or oppose his imperfections. More suavity, perhaps, more flexibility, a greater disposition to assent to opposition, without the stern permission of truth and conscience, might have been agreeable to those, who look only on the surface of a character. But our departed brother did not purchase any man's friendship, at the price of dissimulation. On all occasions he threw out the truth; and left it to take its effect. He did not come with supplication and cringes, to ask permission to creep through the path of duty; but he boldly walked up to the entrance and demanded a passage.

“Every minister, and every man, has his peculiar gift; and it is vain to expect to blend inconsistent qualities in the same mind. The virtues

themselves, though in theory consistent enough with one another, are not always consistent with the peculiarities of even a virtuous individual. Mr. Williams was more formed for a reprover than a consoler ; the chamber of affliction was not, perhaps, his most shining scene. He bore his own trials with too much fortitude fully to enter into the weakness and fears of the mind, enfeebled by sickness and trembling on the verge of eternity. He was certainly not the man whom you would wish to see in any affliction which you had brought on yourself by your own infirmity ; for he would not spare you. He insisted on it, that repentance must go before consolation.

“ As for that sentimental religion, so prevalent in the present day, which consists in the fumes of the imagination rather than in the solid exercises of the heart ; which regulates its hopes and fears by every elevation and depression of the spirits ; the blind impulse ; the affected sigh ; the fair profession, and ostentatious humility, he held them all in utter abhorrence. He could not tolerate, for a moment, the religion, which separates the feelings of the heart from the conduct and the life. He demanded of all professed christians a piety, which proved its power by crucifying the flesh, with its affections and lusts. He seemed to be a man peculiarly calculated to brush away, with a bold hand, all the froth and foam, which too often rest on the waters of the Sanctuary ; and to show to the church of God, pure religion, defecated from

every sediment, in all its transparency and simplicity and truth.

“ Yet he did not pass to the other extreme. In burning with the fire of his eloquence, the wood, the hay and the stubble of imperfect doctrine, he spared, with the wisest discrimination, the gold and the silver and the precious stones, with which it must be combined. Deeply impressed with the truth of man’s depravity, and conscious that the doctrines of the cross were the only cure, he preached them without partiality and without fear. He felt that the sinner was undone, because he found in the Bible that the Saviour was divine.

“ Respecting his abilities—a subject of minor importance in this connexion—every discriminating judge must come to the same conclusion. His executive powers in the pulpit were of the first order. You all remember that melodious voice that fastened the ear to his theme; that beautiful language, those shining illustrations, that energy and earnestness, with which he captivated the attention, and bore down on the heart. He was an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures. Without being a finished scholar, his mind was enriched with knowledge; without being a metaphysician, he was a powerful, practical reasoner. Though his style was occasionally obscure, (the first objection which was always made to it by the critick) he never, perhaps, preached a sermon which did not make, on an attentive hearer, the intended impression. His ser-

mons were so full, that after all the obscure parts were lost, enough remained to satisfy and improve the mind.

“The faults of his character were such as are commonly associated with the great qualities of which I have been speaking. He had great courage and decision; and something of that indiscretion to which these virtues naturally lead. Singling out his ultimate purpose, and conscious of the rectitude of his intentions, he did not always consider the inferior obstacles that stood in his way. An enemy might say he was sometimes rash; but his intimate friends knew, that his seeming rashness was ardour in the cause of religion and truth. His mind commonly rushed to its purposes; but those purposes were generally such as a good man would not be ashamed to own. If his superficial faults sometimes procured for him furious enemies; his real excellence always sealed to him the attachment of the warmest friends. He was not a man to make a neutral impression.

“His closing scene illustrated the power of faith, and the consolations of those truths, which it had been his business to preach. It fell to my lot to announce to him the probability of his speedy dissolution, and the importance of saying to his friends and family whatever he might wish to say, before reason was lost. The tidings were received with calmness and submission; and soon after he said to a friend—*I have not had during my sickness the power of regulating my thoughts as I*

*could wish : it has been a confused and broken time ; but I see in the gospel a broad foundation ; I trust in my Saviour alone ; the purposes of God are right, and I have no wish to alter them.* On another occasion he said:—*When a man is brought into my state—into sickness and a near prospect of eternity, he needs faith, decided faith ; the mind must not be left wavering, doubtful, uncertain ; it must not only see that the gospel is true, but it must repose with living confidence on the promises of the Redeemer.* Under these impressions his spirit took its flight to its Father and God.

“ Farewell, my Brother, I will not say a long farewell—Thy last solemn message still vibrates on my ears.\* Very pleasant has thy life been to me; we took sweet counsel together and walked to the house of God in company. Speak to me by thy death ; admonish me from thy tomb, and urge my conscience to work while the day lasts. And now, eternal Saviour, receive him to thyself—with all his virtues and all his faults ; those virtues, we trust, were the fruit of thy Spirit ; and those faults, we humbly hope, are now washed away in thine atoning blood !

“ To the bereaved widow, and the mourning family, we have no other consolations to offer than those suggested by our subject. May they have

\* This alludes to a message which the speaker received from the deceased a few days before his departure. It was this:—*Enjoy what you can, do all the good you can, while life lasts ; for the days must come, as I have found from experience, when you shall say I have no pleasure in them.* His sickness was languishing and painful.

faith in God ; and let the children remember their father's counsel now that he can speak to them no more. To the church the loss is great. The faithful pastor—the counsellor—the upright man is gone ! and can warn and lead them no more. But fear not, mourning flock—the Great Shepherd reigns ; and has promised never to leave nor forsake his people. But I must speak to one class more—the sinner, who has no faith in Christ. Your reprover is dead—he never can speak to you again. But you must meet him at the bar of God. He will rise up to bear his testimony to the faithful manner, in which he warned you to flee from the wrath to come. Has he spoken in vain ? Are you yet in your sins ? Dare you be a rebel before that coffin ? O ! remember the warnings of the lips that are now silent ; and prepare to meet him when the last trumpet shall wake the dead !”

# SERMON I.



A COMPENDIUM OF THE GOSPEL.

MARK, xvi. 15.

*Preach the Gospel to every creature.*

**I**T is now about eighteen hundred and twenty years since there appeared in the Eastern World, a person of singular dignity, and of uncommon wisdom and disinterestedness, calling himself the Son of God. His avowed object was, to enlighten and redeem the moral world. This person was, from the beginning, attended with such uncommon signs, and endowed with such extraordinary gifts, as could not fail to draw upon him the attention of all the people. Yet such was his modesty, and indifference to personal aggrandizement, that nothing seemed farther from his heart than a desire "to be seen of men." He exhibited nothing of a spirit of emulation, nor affected the parade and glory of human greatness. All the supernatural works which he performed, and all which were wrought by the Father in his behalf, were merely attestations to his superior excellence, or vouchers to the truth of his pretensions. As he assumed the character of the Messiah, he appealed to the Prophets, who had testified of him, whose writings were in the hands of the people, and whose descriptions might be easily com-

pared with the life he exhibited. The manner of his coming, the prodigies which should attend and follow him, the works he should perform, and the death he should die, were all foretold. He, and no other, answered the inspired description of the Messiah. He taught with authority hitherto unknown. He commanded with unheard-of effect. The powers of the natural and moral world alike obeyed him. For this, though unknown by all, and envied and hated by the Prince and the Priest, he was able to engage the affections and procure the company of a chosen few. These he called Disciples, and trained them up in the knowledge and love of his kingdom. They had left all to attend and follow him, and were soon to be invested, by him, with powers similar, but subordinate, to his own, and to be made the vehicles of his communications to all the world.

The writings of his Disciples, dictated under an influence precluding the possibility of mistake, give an account of his character and business ;—his whole design concerning our guilty and miserable world : and these constitute what he calls the *Gospel*, or the good tidings from heaven to men. The system of religion here taught, is eminently the *good news*, inasmuch as the holiness and hope of every rational inhabitant of the globe, have their only basis in the truths of this revelation, and man's way to Divine knowledge no other sufficient and effectual guide.

When about to separate himself from his little family, in order to secure the end of his life, he gave them the charge in the text. Addressing them officially, and therefore their successors in office, he solemnly and authoritatively required them to communicate these tidings to all nations, and pledged himself to continue the Christian Ministry to the end of the world.

To shew you, that what is here called the Gospel, or good news, is pre-eminently entitled to this appellation, and therefore worthy of universal acceptance, is the object of

this discourse. This will be accomplished by a *compendious account of what the Gospel is*:—and to render the subject as simple as possible, and easy to be remembered, I shall consider the whole testimony of Christ and his Apostles as being comprised in a DOCTRINE—a COMMAND—an INVITATION—a PROMISE—and a THREAT.

I. THE DOCTRINE of the Gospel,—which is,—that “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” This is, emphatically, the peculiar Doctrine of the books of the New Testament. For though there are many other doctrinal truths contained in them, yet this, thoroughly understood, will be found to include them all.—This is the grand truth announced by the angel at the Nativity. “Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people: for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.”—This is the Messiah, “whose goings forth have been from everlasting,” and of whose nature and office and object, testimony is borne in Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms.

1. In this DOCTRINE then, is implied, first, the *ruined state of man*. The Wisdom and Goodness of a God could never be employed in providing a Saviour for the *innocent*;—nor for the *guilty*, if able to succor and recover themselves. That is, for men, who have either deserved *well*, or who, though *ill-deserving*, are in a capacity for restoration to righteousness and peace. To put them in a capacity for salvation—to expiate their guilt—to recover them to holiness, and, in this way, to honor and happiness—was the grand object of Christ’s embassy to earth. This is his own account of it. “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” His *name* denotes his *object*—“his name shall be called JESUS, because he shall save his people from their sins.” Thus to be saved, is to be delivered alike from the miseries of a polluted nature, and a guilty and condemned state.—From all the evils indeed,

which, since the expulsion of man from Paradise, have poured in one unbroken torrent on the world, and deluged mountain and valley, island and continent alike, with iniquity and woe.

2. In the second place, this DOCTRINE implies an amplitude and sufficiency, in Jesus Christ, to save unto the uttermost all that cordially receive him—a power, adequate to the subjugation of every enemy of man's peace and virtue—an adaptedness of official virtue, to supply every moral want, and relieve every spiritual infirmity—and wisdom as extensive as his power, to remove all the obstacles to reconciliation between God and man. Obstacles, on the part of God, presented by the sanction of his law, requiring the death of its every transgressor—a sanction, which the honor of his government, and the immutability of his perfections, required him to maintain. Obstacles, on the part of *man*, found in the impotence of his understanding to find a way of escape, and the inveterate opposition of his will to returning to God in any way. To remove the obstacle, on the part of God, it was necessary to vindicate the perfections of God, in his denunciations against the transgressor. To remove the obstacles on the part of *man*, it was equally necessary to secure an influence upon his heart which should transform it into the love and likeness of the Divine law. To vindicate the Divine perfections, and establish the law, the proper wages of sin must be paid, and the curse inflicted. The Messiah must bear in his own person the iniquities of us all, and thus furnish an expression of God's displeasure against sin, while he pardons the sinner; and an affecting and powerful motive to all who return to their allegiance, never more by transgression to move his displeasure, or to incur the penalty of his broken law.

It was necessary that a Mediator should have power to enlighten human ignorance, in respect of the character and counsels of the kingdom; and grace to stoop to our infirm-

ities, that he might illustrate and magnify, in all eyes, the principles of the Divine Government, expose the evil of sin, and exemplify, in man's nature, the excellence of the preceptive will of God. To all these purposes, the Messiah was found equal, and in the office of a Teacher and Sacrifice, a Potentate and Sanctifier, became the author of salvation to all them who obey him. "Great is this mystery of Godliness." "God was manifest in the flesh," according to the testimony of the evangelist John, and as such, was "preached unto the Gentiles" by the Apostles, and "believed on, in" every age of "the world." He is the source of life—"the bread of God." In him the hope of the sinner commences its purifying and animating course, and to him all the ends of the earth look for salvation. Had God exacted of man even one stone, in the foundation of his spiritual house, the temple to this day had been a ruin. But salvation is of the Lord. He is the great corner-stone of the edifice, whose whole foundation was laid, whose superstructure has been reared, and whose top-stone is to be brought forth, in acclamations of rich and infinite grace.

II. But secondly, the Gospel has a COMMAND: and as all its *Doctrines* are involved in the one truth we have examined, so all its *precepts* are comprehended in this one commandment of God—"that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Faith, working by love, is the evangelical Law, by obedience to which, all flesh may be saved. This is "good tidings" to a world under a Law, requiring the death of its every transgressor. Good news indeed—that God can "be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."—Since, "what the Law could not do in that it was weak, through the flesh," the Gospel has achieved. 'For now there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus; the law of the spirit of life having freed them from the law of sin and death.' Freed already from guilt, they are destined to perfect freedom from corruption, and shall

ultimately inherit every good comprised in the promise of mercy unto salvation.

III. The Gospel, in the third place, contains an INVITATION. “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” This invitation is universal. No nation, nor men of any rank or condition, are forbidden the privilege. “To *every creature*,” the commission to preach the Gospel, extends. “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, if any man thirst let him come unto me and drink.” “And the Spirit and the Bride say come, and let all who are interested say come, and whosoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely.” O wretched heathens! who have wasted all your intellectual, physical and moral powers, upon “cisterns which can hold no water,” what cheering tidings shall these be to you! What to your nation, miserable Jew! Tired of your disappointments from lying prophets and seers, of a Saviour to come—what joyful tidings will they shortly be to you? And you, miserable worldling, of christian name!—when in the light of the spirit of truth, you shall behold your needs and your interest in the invitation—what overwhelming gladness will these tidings be to you! And what, at last, to all who welcome cordially and duly prize this Gospel, will be the delights of that banquet which has been spread by redeeming love!

IV. For the answer, take the fourth part. The PROMISE of the Gospel. “An entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—I will give you rest.” How sweet to the weary traveller, the man of active business, the sick man’s aching frame, the galley slave, and the victim of oppression, is the period of deliverance. Yet how soon is every man’s resting season over! But the christian’s rest is an eternal day. ’Tis not cessation from toil and trial merely—but from the galling servitude and disgraceful

drudgery of sin. 'Tis the termination of darkness and apprehension and doubt, and sorrow and temptation and conflict. 'Tis the jubilee of nations.—The rest of Jehovah's kingdom, from the war which has kept it in commotion, from the day of the apostacy in heaven. 'Tis the day of final separation, between the friends of God, and the principalities and powers and thrones and dominions, which have assailed his people and opposed Messiah's reign. 'Tis a rest, comprehensive of all the enjoyment of a prospective eternity of increasing knowledge, holiness and joy. 'Tis a "being filled with the fulness of God." In contrast with man's vassalage, and an imprisoned state of the spirit, it is liberty.—In opposition to the tendency of our present existence, it is immortality.—Compared with the deformity and imperfection of the Church on earth, it is purity and glory. "All things," says this evangelical promise, "are yours."—'Life, death, the world, the goods of the rich, the gifts of the wise, things present and things to come.' To all who receive the DOCTRINE, obey the COMMAND, accept the INVITATION, the PROMISE is made sure. It leads them with acceptance, while here, to a Throne of Grace, and hereafter, to a crown of unfading glory. This—sinful heart! this, is to be saved. And that the heirs of the promise "who have fled for refuge and laid hold on the hope set before them in the Gospel, might have strong consolation, God has confirmed that promise by oath:" so that by two immutable securities they have, made over to them, all that God can grant, compatible with the retention of his supremacy, and all that man can desire, while possessing only a limited capacity.

If this be the Gospel, well do we, Christian Brethren, glory only in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ—and though we have not seen him, though it doth not yet appear what we shall be when awaked in his likeness, yet believing in him, we may well rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

V. But in the last place, the Gospel contains a **THREAT**, and this completes the *evidence*, as well as the *description* of its evangelical excellence. The **THREAT** is terrible; and to an eye of flesh does not readily suggest the consistency or connection between the several parts of these good tidings: and perhaps this appendage may excite a doubt whether the Gospel be quite deserving of the appellation by which it commends itself to men. But what is the **THREAT**? Be not alarmed—contrite spirit! it was never designed to distress the broken heart. Be not high minded—unbeliever! it will be executed with palpable justice on thee, except thou art willing to be saved. He who denies the **DOCTRINE**, disobeys the **COMMAND**, refuses the **INVITATION**, disregards the **PROMISE**, and is unmoved by the **THREAT**, he, and he *surely* “shall be damned”—that is, according to inspired explanation, “shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.” This you will observe is not the language of the Law only, but of the Gospel. Not of unmixed justice merely, but of Justice looking on the world with the eyes of *Grace*. Of *Grace*, in the first place to all who hear the Gospel. Of *Grace*, in the second place, to all who shall be ultimately benefited by the Gospel; and therefore of *Grace*, thirdly, to the Universe as a *whole*.

Strange as it may appear, this very menace is, by the Apostle, stated to be an act of *Grace* to all who hear the Gospel. And none but unbelievers will dissent from this sentiment: for none but unbelievers are determined to reject salvation; and therefore none others have any selfish interest, to bias them to such dissent. But even unbelievers themselves, may possibly be persuaded that the **THREAT**, awful and severe as it is, proceeds from compassion toward them, so far as it has a tendency to evince the absolute necessity of a change of purpose and pursuit, and of exciting them to inquire after the way of escape. That such is its tendency,

we are authorized to say—for in sacred language we have observed that by the terrors of the Lord men have been persuaded. And though it has ever been the language of the thoughtless and profane, as well as of some visionary theologians, ‘we are neither to be *driven* to heaven, nor *frighted* into a course of evangelical virtue ;’ yet should they ever touch the skirts of that virtue, or find the gate to heaven, this **THREAT** will have had some influence in rendering that touch desirable—some instrumentality in persuading them to escape from death.

God did not act without design in revealing his wrath from heaven, against all unrighteousness and ungodliness in men : and what it is not weakness in God to reveal, it is no virtue nor wisdom in man to disbelieve. Whoever believes him sincere in the **THREAT**, will be influenced by his belief ; for faith is an actuating power, and embraces the whole testimony of God. And should so important a part of his testimony have no influence on the heart ? And is it not gracious in God to attempt to move us, by every motive which can touch the springs of human action ? And if destruction actually impends, is it not kind to give the warning as well as provide the way of escape ? And if we hear the note of danger, is it unmanly or unwise to be alarmed and flee ?—Or is it greatness and courage, for a little puny thing, like man, to defy the Almighty’s Thunders ; and boast of bravery in combating the strength of an Omnipotent arm ? As if Jehovah would not stoop to consume the briars arrayed against him, by so insignificant an enemy—or, as if even HE were too weak to make a sinner tremble. ’Tis grace in God to speak in every tongue of entreaty and of admonition, of threatening and of promise, and he is in the grossest sense “ a fool,” who is not moved, when he hears the voice, to turn and live.

But admit that there are men hardy enough to laugh at

his terrors, and to mock when his fear has not yet come— Admit that there are hearts so obdurate, as to contemn alike the tender and the terrible, and to sin on in defiance both of mercy and of vengeance—Is it not an act of the highest compassion to the rest of the universe, to gather such out from among the just, and bind them down to a condition where they can no more annoy the heritage of God, and no more offend by their blasphemies, nor interrupt forever the pleasures of the pure in heart? Is there any other way, to secure the peace, and preserve, uncontaminated, the virtue of his kingdom? In omitting to do this, how is he to fulfil his promises to the redeemed? How is he to shield from outrage, and fulfil his covenant with, his Son? How, in short, is he to do justice to those perfections, which his truth is pledged to exonerate from the imputations with which the incorrigible continues practically to tax them? In a word, without doing all this, before the sun, how far short will he have come, of consummating the glories of his kingdom!

It seems hardly possible, that the intelligent hearer should not perceive, that the glory of God's name and kingdom, requires alike the publication and execution of this **THREAT**; and if so, that it is fitly comprehended in those tidings which angels, and the spirits of good men, proclaim and echo back with gladness, and whose fruits they will ever contemplate with ineffable delight. To the prisoners of despair, it cannot be good tidings. Prisoners of hope, however, as *we* are, it should not grieve.

Tell me, I pray you, if you do not rejoice, when, after having been cruelly oppressed and trodden down by insolence and malice, and your best friends having undeservedly suffered with you from men who have “felt power and forgotten right”—you see that power restrained, that will to inflict such wrongs, confined by proper authority, and rendered harmless to society? And why not thus judge of the Government of God? Is not his the proper authority?

Will he not as accurately apportion punishment to crime? Why then, may it not be esteemed good news, not that others suffer, but that their power to *cause* suffering is abridged? That a day is coming which shall put an end to the mischiefs of sin, and to the power of those who hurt and offend—a day which shall liberate Jehovah's kingdom from evil—when the oppressor shall cease and the vile man no more speak villainy, and the scourge be wrested out of the hand of the malignant—a day in which the faithfulness of God, as his patience has already been, shall be made to excel in glory, and his goodness be relieved from the charge of indifference to sin. Is not all this necessary to the prevention of crime, to the safety of the virtuous, and to the glory of him who has borne, and will ever bear, the sceptre of the worlds? And, if he who would secrete the assassin, and rescue the public robber from the hands of justice, does but excite against himself the indignant sentiments of a virtuous community—how far short of genuine benevolence to God's kingdom, must *we* fall, to account it an unrighteous thing in God, “when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and admired in all them that believe,” to rescue his people from the contamination and injuries of a guilty world!

It is in view of the retributions of that day, that Jesus Christ bids his disciples cultivate the virtues of passive courage—*forbearance, patience, fortitude, meekness.*—It is because such a day is appointed, that he bids us bear the scoff and jest and strife of tongues, and unresistingly take wrong, and receive outrage with christian meekness. “Dearly beloved”—is the argument—“avenge not yourselves—vengeance is mine—I will repay.” The righteous leave the retribution of the wicked to that day—and notwithstanding, love his appearing. Let us not then with arrogance such as approaches that of Eden's seducer, affect to surpass in our mercifulness, the great God himself, whose nature is love, and rear our claim to benevolence on a sup-

position, which subverts the integrity and kindness of Jehovah's throne.—While we adore the *grace*, let us not disjoin it from the *truth* which came by Jesus Christ.

If now it has been made out to your conviction, hearer—as was proposed in the beginning—that the testimony of Jesus Christ, called the “good tidings,” is preeminently entitled to this appellation; then, in the name of its blessed author, why do you not receive and welcome it to your hearts? What barrier is there between that heart and salvation? If you like the Gospel—if it be not in pretence merely, but in *truth* good tidings to your ear—if the DOCTRINE be such as you believe and love—the COMMAND not grievous—the INVITATION such as you dare not refuse—and if, of consequence, you embrace and rest upon the PROMISE—and acquiesce in the THREAT—then, I repeat it, what barrier is there between the heart and salvation? No other salvation is offered, no other possible to a sinner. And Jesus Christ came, and laboured, and died, and revived for a very different end from that you covet, if you *desire* any other!

The view then which we have taken of the Gospel, if substantially correct, settles the question, for each of us, whether there exists at this time, a controversy between him and God. Whether Jesus Christ, by the Gospel, has effected a reconciliation between the Father and his heart; or whether God and he be still at variance. Nor can the question be fairly evaded—for Christ himself has already decided the previous question, whether a man may, at the same time, love the Father and make no terms with the Son, by saying peremptorily,—“he that hateth me, hateth my Father also.” What then must be the depravity of *his* heart and how certainly is he in a state of condemnation, who does not love the Gospel!

## SERMON II.



ESTIMATE OF THE WORLD'S MORALITY.

MARK, X. 21.

*Jesus beholding him, loved him ; and said unto him, One thing thou lackest.*

**T**HE case stated in the narrative of which this passage is a part, is a case of every week's occurrence. It is the case of thousands who are this day before the altar of God—of every man, who, instead of asking life, in the humble and fervent spirit of the publican, comes running to Jesus with the self-righteous enquiry—"What lack I yet?"

It is a case, however, which demonstrates, that a man's character may be of very *fair exterior*, while utterly destitute of *goodness* in the eye of God. That he may be able to say, in fancied sincerity, when the commandments are read to him, "all these things have I kept from my youth up," and still possess that *temper*, and abide under that condemnation, which exclude a man from the kingdom of heaven. Nay, that in all his manifestations, he may *appear* to deserve the approbation, and love of mankind, and still lack the *one thing*, for want of which, this young man was re-proved of his Lord, and sent away sorrowing.

But the case before us, furnishes another thought, not unworthy of consideration. It involves the sentiment, that the

moral excellence, recommended and enjoined in the two tables of the law, is so consummate, that, to a good heart, its very *appearance* is captivating; and that such a heart will bear testimony to this truth, by throwing around the subject of seeming loveliness the arms of its warmest affection. This is the natural operation of that "charity" which "hopeth all things," not forbidden by evidence, and of which JESUS CHRIST is, in all his conduct, so excellent a model. He saw in this young man the *appearance* of such excellence, and no sooner did he behold it, than he "loved him."

But the same charity which carried Christ such a length on the one hand, moved him on the other, to put the morality of the youth to the proof—to bring these appearances to the touchstone, by which *Christian morality* and *this world's righteousness* are distinguished: and thus to give practical evidence, that the same "charity" which "*hopeth all things, rejoiceth*" only "*in the truth.*"

We can do no better service for those who sustain the same character with this man, than to hold up this test before them; that in this mirror they may see, there is "one thing" wanting in their morality, and that with all their loveliness, in *our* eye, as well as their own, the *defect of that* destroys their title to the kingdom of heaven.

Let them observe then, that the subject of our contemplation was one of the world's *best* men—as perfect an exhibition of the virtue of unsanctified hearts, as poor human nature ever made; as perfect at least, as ever fell under *our* observation. The claim of this man to goodness, was as well founded, as that of any one, whose righteousness is of the *law*, and of the will of the flesh, rather than of GOD: and yet, he was the subject of Christ's condemnation. His claim to the character of an *innocent* man—a *good* man, was as well supported as that of any youth unborn of the Spirit, and yet, as appears in the sequel, his righteousness, when brought to the test of forsaking all and following

Christ, proved to be founded in mere selfishness. His innocence involved idolatry, and his goodness, brought into the light of the sun, was transient “as the morning cloud, and the early dew.” If it were indeed so, and *our* youth have no other ground of acceptance with God ; and our *old men*, a righteousness which can no better bear the test—then, a nation of such men might have been crowded into Sodom, and not have had righteousness enough to have delivered the city.

The imaginary triumph, therefore, which the world’s moral man enjoys over the Christian, whose appearance may sometimes be more exceptionable, is altogether premature. He forgets the principle established by our Lawgiver, that it is very possible a man may *seem* to have kept the law “from his youth up,” and yet have nothing of the righteousness by which a sinner is justified. He forgets too, in taking to himself the honors of such a triumph over the fallen David, and Noah, and Moses, that God acknowledges *for them*, a righteousness, in which *he* has no interest, and a righteousness *in* them, of which *he* has not a tittle ; and that while *they* stand on a foundation which will survive the wreck of time, and which the tempest of the great day of God’s wrath cannot shake, *his* boasted edifice is built upon the sand. He should have suspended his triumph, till he had demonstrated the error of the inspired sentiment, that he who builds his hope on the righteousness of the law, can sustain the ground of that hope only by showing, that *against* this law, he has never, even in *one* point, offended—since, if he has transgressed only one of the least of the commandments, God will reckon him guilty of all. Comparing, then, the rebuke in the text, with this decision, instead of glorying in his *virtue*, we should hear him exclaiming, with Isaiah—“ I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips !” Or saying with Paul, “ O wretched captive of sin ! who shall

deliver me!" We should see him, with the man of Uz, sitting in sackcloth and self-abhorrence—repenting in dust and ashes.

We have now come to the point on which, the question we are to settle, principally turns. We do not hesitate to admit, that this man's morality has in it an appearance of loveliness. We do not mean to detract an iota from the distinction, to which the honest man is entitled, over the knave—the beneficent and good tempered man, over the churl—the man of truth and sobriety over the drunkard, glutton and common liar, and the decorous in speech and manners over the wanton and profane.—We do not mean to say, that there is not *deservedly*, a very broad line of distinction, between the palpable sabbath breaker, and him who *seems* to regard the day to the Lord—between the parent, provident of all the means of temporal comfort, and eternal happiness for his household, and the parent, careless and negligent of their present and future good—between frugality and profligacy, compassion and hardheartedness, between the man who follows, and him who refuses to follow the dictates of his own conscience—between an exterior habitually fair and its opposite. But the question is, whether in the measurement of this morality, by the standard either of Moses, or of Christ, it amounts to *righteousness*?—whether either in the scales of truth and grace, or of law, it is right? This is the *only* question.—For if it is *not*, if it come not up to one or the other of these standards, it is not righteousness at all; and the one character is as far from the Divine acceptance as the other.

The claim we are now examining is under the *Law alone*; and if this morality is, in *all respects*, such as the law demands, then, its subject not only stands acquitted of sin, in the judgment of his fellow creatures, but wants nothing to entitle him to justification in the eye of his God.—But if it have *one* defect, in *spirit, matter* or *form*, then, for whatever *else* it may be valued, it is utterly worthless for justification.

Should it be found, however, instead of a defect in *measure*, to want the very *nature* of righteousness—if in fact it be but a finely polished, and well dressed *statue*—a body without a soul—then, it is obvious, the claim of its subject is lost, and his expectation of acceptance for the loveliness of his morality, perishes at once.

Now Jesus Christ has taught us that this is the case : for while he affirms that the law demands *all* the soul, he shows that this man's keeping of the law had *no* soul in it ; and that his *heart* and his *morality* looked to very different objects. The one, had the appearance of the righteousness of the law, the other, went after its covetousness, and was therefore a palpable violation of the law. But Christ assures us, that the very *spirit* of the law, that without which we cannot *approach* the righteousness it demands—is the very thing which this young man's morality wanted ; and that without this *one* thing, though he were an angel for knowledge, a saint in compassion, and a very martyr in his sacrifices, he would still be nothing before God. Hear how the Lord of the conscience has summed up the duties of the ten commandments of the law. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Do *this*, and thou shalt live.” Have you found virtue such as this, in the morality which this world's *best* man has produced ? Do you find such in the example before us ? On the contrary, Christ only puts it to the moderate proof of giving up its devotedness to earth, and leaving all for *him*, and, like the leaves of the fruitless fig tree, all its righteousness withers away. He did not demand of the young man, the relinquishment of any thing more than *corruptible* possessions, in proof of his love to God, and yet, even this demand was greater than his morality could answer. This at once betrayed the object of his supreme affection, and though it be of no consequence to the argument *what* that

object is, so it be not God, it demonstrates the insufficiency of all morality which has not this religious principle for its basis. There was something he loved more than God ; and therefore, since supreme love to him is the *least* the law demands, and will ever accept, he was fairly convicted of a total destitution of the righteousness which he affected to have possessed from his youth.

Does the salvation proposed in the Gospel, abrogate the law ?—Does it annul this principle of the law ? On the contrary, it establishes it. It does indeed waive the measure of *personal* righteousness which the law exacts, but the *nature* of the moral excellence required by it—the principle of supreme love to God—the *spirit* of the law—is retained, in the scheme of salvation by grace ; and, indeed, is the very thing to which the Gospel restores us. Therefore, as we are hereafter to show, the morality of this young man, was as unlike the righteousness required by the *Gospel*, as it was remote from that enjoined in the law.

I am aware that there is something extremely mortifying, and even revolting to our natures, in being set down, in regard to justification, with pirates and prostitutes, and in taking rank, as regards legal obedience, with thieves and publicans, after we have been at the pains to avoid their crimes, and to adorn our lives with a graceful and accomplished morality. But if it be an unquestionable verity, that our righteousness comes not up to the standard of Divine erection, and if it be no more of the nature of holiness than *theirs*, why may not the eye of God, without being evil, discern the fact ? And why is it not just in God to give to all unrighteousness its own name, and its proper condemnation ? If my alledged *justice*, have no other source, than that exactness of distribution which is observed among thieves and pirates, in the division of their plunder—if my *compassion* to my neighbor, have no higher character than that animal instinct which leads the herd to express the cries

of nature over one of its species in distress—and if my *chastity*, and my *honor*, have no more claim to a holy origin than the occasional virtues of the basest of mankind—why should not the God of truth, denounce my *morality* as unrighteousness, as well as their *immorality*, and consider us alike far from the obedience he demands?

Jesus Christ, we should remember, will hereafter be the *Judge*, as he is now the expositor, of his own laws. He declares the sixth commandment violated by my *causeless anger*, as truly as by my neighbor's murderous knife: and the seventh, as certainly by my libidinous *thoughts*, as by his practised arts at seduction: and the eighth, by my neglect to relieve my poor neighbor from distress, as by taking away the property of the rich. And though the crimes of my neighbor may be more obvious to *men*, and more *gross* even in the eye of God, yet Christ affirms my want of obedience unto righteousness, to be no less real, and my *condemnation* no less certain and no less just, though my demerit be not of the same extent. So long then, as my morality extends not to the principle of the law, whether I feel or not, the *necessity* of a better religion, it is certain I have no more relish for it, and no more community in it, than the more abandoned. With all my reputed superiority to the more openly vicious, I should enjoy *heaven* no better than they, were I taken thither. With my present taste unamended, my conversation would be turned to dumb inquietude; my cheerfulness to sadness; and I could not say, with the children of the kingdom, "our communion is with the Father, and his son Jesus Christ."—My *heart* is not on the side of evangelical virtue. I am hostile to the principles of the law. The glory of God is not the ultimate end of my actions, and therefore my best works are wicked—and wicked works prove me the enemy of God.

That there is no error in this reasoning, you will perceive by a due attention to the following facts.—You may find

all the virtues belonging to the morality in question, among one or another, of those classes of men, which we *know* to be excluded from the character of the righteous, and from the kingdom of heaven. The drunkard, for example, is often found to possess a liberal and friendly disposition. The avaricious man, though he do *not* possess this *generous* temper, is strictly temperate. The ambitious, is frequently the most condescending and courtly of men : and profane men are, not unfrequently, scrupulously exact in all their commercial intercourse. Yet all these are stricken indiscriminately from the list of good men, by the direction of God. Now as from one or another of these classes of ungodly men, we are able to gather every specific virtue which is found in the morality of the character under examination, and, as in all those men there is nothing of the nature of holiness, it is very easy to perceive, that their junction in the same man, alters not their *nature*, and can in no case constitute a *holy* creature. The basis of their virtue is the same, and the motives from which their morals flow, have the same character ; and if this man, combining all the excellence claimed by all the classes of men known to be excluded from God's kingdom, if this man, have *no* virtue, not found in *some* of them, then it is certain he has never passed the line which divides the carnal, from the spiritual world ; and " to be carnally minded is death."

If there be no sophistry in all this, (and if there be, we must abandon some part of the Word of God)—then the morality of the man who loves and serves the creature, more than the Creator, and yet unblushingly asks, " what lack I yet," has nothing in it of the righteousness which the law of God enjoins. His unrighteousness is manifest, and " we know that all unrighteousness is sin." He does not lack " the *form*," but he wants the " *power* of godliness," and without this our most specious actions are unholy. While selfishness pervades all his motives, and is in truth the soul

of his morality, a man's *visible* actions may be through life a fac-simile of the visible actions of Jesus Christ, and his soul remain as far from righteousness unto justification, as that of the hollow-hearted disciple who betrayed him; or as that of the Sanhedrim, who called him an impostor and hung him on a tree.

Who does not perceive then, that the "one thing" wanting in the morality of this amiable young man, was *essential* to righteousness? And who, pretending to reason and common sense, does not know, that to lack any thing *essential* to righteousness, is to be destitute of righteousness altogether? This young man then, does not answer the inspired description of a friend of God. He was not a disciple of Christ—he was not an heir of heaven. Every *such* man has the testimony of Christ that he *pleases* God. When therefore, the young ruler is brought to his bar, though he have the testimony of the whole world to the loveliness of his character, we see clearly that he must be condemned, because he has nothing of the righteousness which the *law* demands.

Let us now examine the terms on which mankind are promised justification by the GOSPEL. Let us see if the same man, with all his embellishments, finds in *this* tent, a bed any better fitted to his length, or a covering, in which to wrap himself more securely, or a pillow on which he can repose in stronger assurance that his peace is made with God.

He must have been inattentive to the language of the Gospel, or have entirely mistaken its meaning, who has not learned, that it requires a righteousness as *perfect*, as that required by the law. The difference between the law and the Gospel is, the one requires *personal* righteousness without spot, the other accepts a *vicarious* righteousness of the same character, in a surety. Who has not seen the Apostle, levelling the whole artillery of Sinai, against the man, who goes about to establish his *own* righteousness, instead of

submitting himself to the righteousness of GOD! who has not heard, a hundred times, from the lips of JEHOVAH'S messengers, that in the *Lord*, and not in works of *law*, man has righteousness and strength; and that "there is salvation in no other!"—And who does not know, that this righteousness of Christ, is received and secured by *faith alone*, that God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. In language plain and intelligible to every honest mind, it is settled, that faith is ever to be one condition of a sinner's salvation—That "he who *believeth* shall be saved;" and that whoever can make good his claim to faith in Jesus Christ, is no longer under condemnation, but has "passed from death unto life." Now every *child*, who is able to put these thoughts together, must perceive, that God has abated nothing of his original demand on man, save that when the law was impotent to give life to the transgressor, God gave it to him through his Son; "that the righteousness of the law might thus be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." Did not Jesus Christ pass to the end of the law for righteousness, and bring in for the believer a ground of acceptance which can no more sink from beneath his feet? And is it not explicitly declared, that to those who believe in him, "there is," for this cause, "no condemnation"? If then, righteousness come not by the law, and Christ died not in *vain*, then the believer is complete in him; and by virtue of his obedience unto death, is as just before God, that is, as free from *legal* condemnation, as if he had *personally* fulfilled the law's demands.

But, it is to be remembered, the faith which takes hold of the righteousness of Christ, is not a dead and barren speculation. It has the property of a *living* and *restoring* power. It puts into the morality of its subject, an animating and purifying leaven, which raises the soul to God, and diffuses through the whole man the spirit of obedience. It subdues

the dominion of that carnal mind, which does its works to be seen of men. It is a faith which works by love; and which brings to the heart that great peace, which is expressly said to be characteristic of them who love the law; that peace, which never fails to accompany spiritual-mindedness. It secures the life of the soul, by uniting it to Christ, and by ensuring that repentance from dead works, which is requisite to the acceptable service of the living God. So that instead of disparaging good works, as the doctrine of justification by faith, is said by ignorant men to do, it is that *one thing*, essential to constitute any work a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. "Without me," said Jesus, "ye can do nothing"—"but he that believeth in me, hath life, and," continuing to believe, "shall never die."

For all this, we have the warrant of God's word. But where has he said, if ye possess that heartless morality, which the infidel practices no less than you, that you shall be saved? *When* did he say, and to *whom* did he say it—that to pass with reputation in the church, is enough to constitute you righteous in his sight? Instead of this, he calls on every man to supply in himself that one essential thing, by denying himself, taking his cross, and following Christ. The young man, with all that loveliness of manners, and all that exemption from vice, and all that sterling integrity, with which men of the world compliment each other, could not endure this. The way of righteousness by the *Gospel*, as well as by the law, was too strait and too refined for him; and more *sober*, but no *better* than before, he went away grieved, and unfit for the kingdom of heaven. The "author and finisher of the faith," could not call him his disciple *as he was*, and he would not be prevailed with to humble himself to the terms, by which alone, any sinner can attain to eternal life.

Now the grand defect of this man's morality was, that he loved something, (no matter what) more than God. Was

he not then unreconciled to the *Law*, which *forbids* man to love any thing more than God? And was he not destitute, too, of the *faith* which Christ demands?—the faith which works by love to that law, and overcomes the world—the world, ever idolized by the wicked? How then, I pray you, did the *Gospel* help to prop up the wretched edifice, which tottered to its base at the thunders of the *Law*, and in the ruins of which, *he* would sooner be buried, than flee for refuge to the hope set before him in the *Gospel*?

Thus fatal to all this world's morality, are the precepts of the *Law*, and the *Doctrines* of Christ. If it fall on *that* rock, it is broken; if it be fallen upon by *this* rock, it is ground into powder. He who builds upon such morality the hope of acceptance, virtually makes God such an one as himself; and he cannot, ought not, *will* not, bear from a creature—a sinful creature—an indignity like this. The man who persists in offering him such an indignity, is, on the most favorable supposition, in a spiritual lethargy; and the language addressed to him by Jesus Christ is, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and I will give thee light.” “Young man! I say unto thee arise,” and, no longer content in your conformity to this world, “be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

The morality we have contemplated, flows from a fountain, which has filled our world with confusion and misery. It is a morality, in view of whose source, the soul of Christ was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. It produced such a spectacle as shocked even *Roman* insensibility, and at which the sun, and stars, and rocks and graves, gave signs of mourning and wo. It is the morality of a Pharisee, which tithes mint, and annise and cummin, and neglects the weightier matters of Judgment and Faith, of Mercy and the love of God. It is a morality which stands erect in the midst of the Temple, and thanks God for its superior lustre,

while draining Christ of his heart's-blood, and leaving it to Publicans, who make no such pretensions to *legal* righteousness, to avail themselves of that blood, and to go in upon it to the kingdom of heaven. All this notwithstanding, it is a morality with which many a sinner can lay down his head, and lull himself under the altar, and retire to his ordinary concerns, as fearless and inconsiderate of the wrath to come, as if it sealed his pardon, or placed him in the number of them who need no repentance, because they went never astray. This is a morality, unbeliever! which *you* can practise, but which will have no advocate before the tribunal of Justice, where its deluded subject is soon to hear the last sentence the wicked will *ever* hear from the mouth of the living God.

If, then, there be in this assembly a single soul, who has nothing better than this, in which to appear before Jesus Christ, and who, with self-complacency, can rush in his rags into the presence of his Judge, and demand of him, "what lack I yet?"—I entreat that soul to consider, whether *his* be not exactly the condition of the man who, thinking himself to be something when he is nothing, deceiveth himself. And I beg of him, while he attempts to expound the enigma, that the "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," instead of throwing away any thing which is lovely in his appearance, and instead of abandoning the *form* of right actions, only to withdraw his confidence from them, and to add to the right form, the infusion of that *holy* principle, which alone constitutes actions *good*, in the sight of God.

And if there be any one among that sex, who have most of this native and acquired loveliness, and who are most susceptible of flattery;—if in short there be *one*, in this assembly, of any sex, or rank, or age, depending upon doings or appearances, such as flattered the hopes of the young ruler, and who imagines because he is not *grossly* vicious, like others, that his *heart* is *right* with God—I beg him to see

that the righteousness on which he so depends, is like the props and blockings of the ship upon the stocks, the very obstacle to her embarking on the element for which she was built; and that until this is loosed and swept away, and she be raised above it, however thoroughly her *ways* are smoothed, and however capacious, and noble, and sustaining the richest freight, she will be as far from answering the end of her existence, as if every timber were still standing in its native forest, and every bolt still lying in its native bed of ore:—And though, you put on all her tackle, and spread all her canvass, and give her all the breeze which would be necessary to bear her to her destined port, she will never move at all toward the haven. The artificer will have bestowed the labor, and the proprietor incurred the expense in vain; and all the expectations of the beholders will have been gotten up like this fair fabric of human device, only to perish on the stocks.

Whoever, then, will escape so unwelcome, so intolerable a disappointment, let them seek first the kingdom of God and *his* righteousness. Let them imbibe the spirit of him, into whose gates they would enter, and in whose immortal pleasures and honors they would partake—for “if any man have not the *spirit* of Christ, he is none of his.”

## SERMON III.



OBEDIENCE ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

REVELATION, xxii. 14.

*Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

**T**HERE would be little cause for apprehension that there are few chosen to salvation, might every one who saith Lord, Lord, enter into the kingdom of heaven. Crowded to overflowing, would be the mansions of the just, might the claim to acceptance be universally acknowledged, “we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works.” But, amidst the immense diversity of foundations on which men build their hopes, there is only one which will stand; and among all the variety of evidence relied upon, that they *are* building on that foundation, there is but one species of proof which will be admitted in the court of heaven. The foundation of hope, is the *atonement* of Christ; the evidence of being built on that foundation, is *obedience* to Christ.

It is not then the man, who in a vision or a trance, has been caught up to paradise, and heard unspeakable words—not he whose relation of experiences, draws tears from every eye, and most easily wins the charity of the church—not

the man who has astonished the world by splendid acts of beneficence—not he who has compassed sea and land, to make proselytes to *his* sect, or whose preaching has been attended with wonderful effects on the bodies and the passions of men, to whom is promised the crown of glory. That man of trances, *may* have had the heart of a sorcerer. That relater of experiences, may be found a deceiver. That prodigy of generosity, may have given alms only to be seen of *men*. That powerful preacher, may have been an unbeliever, and that zealous laborer for proselytes, two-fold more a child of delusion, than the subject of his conversion.

One would think, from what he beholds of the religious world--their discordances of sentiment, their difference of rites, their variety of worship, and the zeal of each for the peculiarities of his *sect*, that there were as many Gods and Saviours, as there are religious distinctions, and that the path to heaven is as manifold as their Gods. A thorough examination of the scriptures, with a humble and prayerful spirit, brings us, however, to the conclusion, that there is but *one* "name given under heaven, whereby we can be saved," and that the most simple and infallible criterion of a *title* to his salvation, is obedience to his commands. To the *exclusion* of this test, no other can be genuine. This, comprehends every other.—Him, who saith he loveth, or even *knoweth* God, and keepeth not his *commandments*, inspiration pronounceth a deceiver, and into the holy city, we know, entereth nothing that maketh a lie.

But obedience is not possible without a rule. And no rule, by which we can please God, is given us, other than the precepts and example of Jesus Christ. Without *him*, we have no system of truth to believe, and without faith in such a system, no foundation for obedience exists. All that passes for religion in the world, other than what is comprehended in obedience to Jesus Christ our Lawgiver, is mere delusion, and all hopes of future happiness drawn from any

other source than the grace of God in Christ, like the baseless fabric of a vision. They may form a pleasant amusement for a night, but with the slumbers and the darkness, those hopes shall flee away, and leave not a trace behind.

In the discussion of this subject, I propose to show First, That *obedience to Christ* is necessary to prove us his Disciples.

Secondly, that the connection between obedience, and a right to expect salvation, is a connection of *Grace*.

And, in the third place, that obedience is of essential importance to happiness.

I. First, the proof of being Christ's Disciples—They *do* his commandments. There are not wanting teachers of religion who imagine, that the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, is subversive of the practice of holiness. We are happy to be able, in the simplicity of Christ, to overthrow such an imagination. Throughout the Bible it is declared with equal explicitness and fulness, that to do the will of God, in opposition to the will of the *flesh*, it is necessary that we believe in his Son—and that to do it in singleness of heart, as unto Christ, in opposition to a mere *seeming* performance, is the only proof of the genuineness and purity of our faith. The prevailing sects in the day of Christ's personal ministry, observed merely the *letter* of the commandments; and because they affected obedience to God, while their *hearts* were far from him, he denounced them as “a seed of *evil* doers and a generation of vipers.” God has directed that we do all things *heartily* as unto the Lord, and in the name of Christ.—Disobedience is a practical contradiction of this rule. Nothing is of the nature of obedience to God, which is not conformed to the *spirit* as well as letter of the law; and this conformity cannot exist without love. No acts, or exercises, therefore, of a heart destitute of love, (since they regard not the *spirit* of the law,) can partake of the *nature*

of obedience. They are not a *doing* of the commandments, however similar they may be in their form, or exterior character, to the letter of the precept.

But why talk of *doings*, say you, when man is to be justified by his *faith*? Plainly because doing is not *opposed* to believing, but believing is a doing of one great commandment of God. *True* faith, is an act of the highest obedience, and as such, it is a duty founded on that command, without whose performance, it is impossible to please him. For *this*, said Christ, ‘is the Father’s will, that ye believe on the name of the Son of God, and that every one who believeth on him, should have everlasting life.’—But in any other view, than that of an act of obedience to God, faith is neither a virtue, nor a *criterion* of virtue. And though I have *all* faith, so as to remove mountains, and even to suffer martyrdom, it profiteth me nothing. Let the man who is destitute of the *spirit* of obedience to God, tell me he believes, and I will answer him—the *Devils* also believe. Let him say he believes and was baptized, and therefore according to the word of God, *must* be saved—I answer, Simon Magus also believed, and was baptized, but having nothing of the *spirit* of obedience was pronounced to be “in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity.” Jesus Christ owns relationship to no man, who offers any reason for his acceptance, which excludes sincere obedience to God, and a doing of his will from the heart. “Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? Whosoever shall *do* the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” When, therefore, exulting in the thought of being the parent of the babe of Bethlehem, the matron exclaimed, “blessed is she that bare thee;” Jesus answered, “yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.” The endearing and indissoluble union between Christ and his disciples, is constituted by a unity of spirit in regard to the will of God.

But some will say, that *this* is life eternal, to *know*\* the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent. True, yet this knowledge is not a mere light in the understanding, like that relating to *human* science. Men not unfrequently take their *light* for *religion*, when it is only a thing of the head, while obedience is of the heart; when it is a knowledge only of what they *ought* to be, rather than of what they *are*. It is the *application* of knowledge, to the end for which it is given, and this alone, which renders the enlightened, holy. *Thus* to apply our speculative knowledge, is an act of obedience; and to *neglect* so to apply it, is disobedience. The servant who knew his Lord's will, and did it not, was beaten with many stripes. To *know*, without corresponding exercise and action, therefore, is not to comply with the Divine will. On the other hand, to him that knoweth to do right, and doeth it *not*, to him it is sin.

It was to men who hung upon the lips of his *personal* ministry, Christ said, "if ye *know* these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them." Many whose heads are stored with the precepts of the Gospel, bear testimony to the fact, that such happiness is not *theirs*. As faith is the evidence of things unseen, and rests on the testimony of Christ, whom the Father commands men to hear, and is therefore of the nature of obedience; so to reduce our knowledge of christian doctrine and precept to practice, results from a confidence in Christ's testimony, and is therefore of the nature of faith. Not to *believe*, is to impeach God's veracity; not to *obey*, is to deny Christ's authority; and both these are daring acts of hostility, against the Father and the Son. Fitly, therefore, did Christ give us this criterion of our discipleship—

\* The Author might have shown such an objector his ignorance of the use of language. Indeed, he has done it in effect, but it should have been done more explicitly. In the language of John, the word "know" is used, by synecdoche, for an entire reception of the Gospel of Christ; just as "faith" is used by the sacred writers, not only for simple belief, but for the sentiments and conduct which should follow from believing.

“ye are my friends, if ye *do* whatsoever I command you.” For there is no man without his creed; none utterly destitute of the knowledge of his *duty*. But, as to believe the *words* of inspiration, and not the sense, is to reject the substance, and rest on sound; so to stand trial on a head filled with religious knowledge, without a heart to apply it to practice, is to violate our obligation in the very act of acknowledging it. With such men the Lawgiver and Saviour expostulates in language such as this, “*Why* call ye me Lord, Lord, and *do* not the things which I say?” And the inference of the Apostle is—“it had been better for them, not to have *known* the way of righteousness, than, having such knowledge, to turn away from the holy commandment which was delivered them.”

Still, to the evident necessity of doing his commandments, others will offer the evasion, that God has made promises to good *affections*; and that to their convictions of sin, and wretchedness and helplessness, they have added the sighs of sensibility, and the sorrows of the heart. God has promised nothing to disobedience, and it is to no purpose that we have religious *affections*, if they be not of the pure and holy character which he has enjoined. Herod heard the gospel gladly. Judas had convictions and sorrows, which led him to repent his treachery. Saul confessed that he had done wrong. Felix was moved to trembling by the preaching of the Gospel. And even Pharoah, after enduring the *tenth* plague, came to the acknowledgment, that God was righteous, but that he and his people were wicked. And all *affections* which have not the spirit of obedience for their root, though they produce flashes of joy, and streams of momentary pleasure, and persuade men that they are the favorites of heaven, will soon die away, and leave their fond and deluded subjects, as they found them, poor and wretched and blind and naked. Even the heart of *rock*, may bring forth such *promise* of fruit, and the foolish virgin thus sleep se-

curely, without a supply of oil. I counsel thee, said Christ, to buy of me treasures that never fail. Such affections are too superficial, to be rested on as evidence of a title to eternal life. But there is a religious affection, which will afford a shelter, not merely in the summer's gentle heat, but in the storm and flood, which sweeps earth from her foundations, and buries every sand-based edifice, with its presumptuous tenant, in a common ruin. It is known by its *fruits*. It not only cometh to Christ, and heareth these sayings of his, but *doeth* them. Its foundation cannot be shaken—it is laid upon the *rock*. The religious tower which answers this description, is at all times a refuge and a defence. Its possessor is serene in the last mighty ruin. He has meat to eat, when the field and the vine and the flocks of the fold, supply him no more forever. He has a right to the tree of life, and free access to the rivers of pleasure, in the midst of the paradise of God.

But you have reformed your *life*, and this is satisfactory evidence that you are safe. You are not only more moral than you *were*, but more so than other men. No longer an extortioner, or adulterer, or profaner of the sabbath—you fast oft, and give alms of all you possess. But to whom is this done—asks the Judge—have ye done it at all unto *me*? Reformation will indeed be accepted, provided it be *universal*. But what is a universal reformation? A compliance with the demands of the Gospel. It must reach the heart, as well as influence the life. With all your reforming, may you not have forgotten to purify first, the *inner* man, and to make the fountain good? This is Christ's command; and "to obey, is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Neither a partial *reformation*, nor a partial observance of *some* of the precepts, is counted obedience. Every command of the Gospel is of the same authority, and wherever the disposition to *universal* righteousness is wanting, there the *spirit* of obedience is not found. We cannot

follow Christ, and set the Gospel against the law, as our rule of life : for on the Law and the Prophets, he founded all his precepts and habits of life. And if he came not to *destroy* the rule, he came to restore *us* to the spirit of obedience to the law. “If ye keep my commandments, then are ye my disciples indeed, and shall abide in my love.” And we have this confidence in the Lord concerning the Church, said the Apostle, that ye both *do*, and *will* do, the things we have commanded you. Does not Christ always thus distinguish, between *real* and merely *nominal* disciples? “Do not after their *works*, for they *say*, but *do not*”—They *act*, “to be seen of men.”

The Apostles followed their Master, in inculcating the *spirit* of obedience, in opposition to that barely literal observance of the precept, which even Baalam’s covetousness could not dispense with. “If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, to do less or more,” still, for the love of the wages of unrighteousness, he taught Balak to seduce the people of God to sin; and there he stands, a conspicuous beacon to men, glorying in their conformity to the law, while utterly destitute of the *spirit* towards the Lawgiver which it enjoins. The language of James bears directly on this point, when saying, that “*he* is the man, blessed in his deeds, who is not a forgetful hearer, but a *doer* of the word”—and when adding, that the faith which is *alone*, is no evidence at all of a Christian temper—of a heart, delighting in the commandments of God. The Apostle Paul, impressed with the same view of the subject, demands an *inward* and an *active* righteousness. And, to the same end, the Apostle John declares, that he only who doeth righteousness is born of God, or is in fact righteous before him. And, to put the doctrine of the text beyond doubt, we have only to add, that we cannot even offer a prayer, in the spirit of obedience, and in conformity with Christ’s direction, but

by saying—"thy will be *done*." And when, in the process of the last judgment, it shall be said to the good and faithful servant—"Well *done*, for inasmuch as ye have done it unto these my brethren, ye have done it unto me"—then, the Universe will perceive, to the joy of the just, and to the confusion of the wicked, that God is no respecter of persons, but that whatsoever *good* thing *any* man hath done, the same he has received of the Lord; and that they who have not obeyed the Gospel, nor, as the servants of Christ, done the will of God from the heart, shall have been justly accounted disobedient, and recompensed according to their works.

Thus you have before you, in the actual *doing* of the commandments, the evidence of an obedient temper—of a disciple of Christ; and of consequence, the evidence of a title to eternal life. And thus we have it settled, by infallible witnesses, that the doctrine of justification by faith alone, through the righteousness of Christ, is perfectly consistent with a judgment according to our works; and that whoever declares that the belief of *that* doctrine tends to licentiousness, and encourages men in sin, calumniates, not men, but God.

II. This may more fully appear, by stating, in the second place, the *connection* between obedience, and the right or title to eternal life. No *sinner*, it is obvious, can claim any thing of God as a *debt*. If he have a right to expect salvation, it must be founded upon *promise*. If he have any title to life, it must be derived from a free-will offering of his injured Sovereign. I need not press the conscience, therefore, with arguments to convict it, that if there *be* any connection between obedience to God's commandments, and a right to the tree of life, it is a connection of *Grace*—of *mere* Grace. The law recognizes no transgressor as just before God. It makes no provision for remission of sins. It knows of no title to righteousness, acquired by the *deeds* of a sinner. The obedience, then, of which we have treated,

is not known in *law* ; nor the *title* to the heavenly inheritance, *connected* with that obedience. But if the inheritance, or right, come not by the *Law*, it must be of *Grace* : for that which is not *due*, is by necessity a gift ; and a gift precludes the idea of previous *obligation* on the part of him who bestows it. The right, then, is acquired by a Divine constitution, superadded to the *Law*. It is a right, acquired for man by *purchase* ; and conferred, according to stipulations entered into by the Father and the Son. It is the right of a *prisoner* to go free, upon the surety's paying the price of ransom. To the sinner, salvation, of consequence, is a *free gift* ; while to the *mediator*, or surety, his deliverance is an act of righteousness. Christ, however, came to redeem us, not only from guilt, and from captivity, and bondage, but to purify us unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. *Our obedience*, is the evidence of our having become partakers in this redemption ; and not at all, either the cause, or means of such redemption. Our restoration to the spirit of obedience, as well as to the forfeited inheritance, is the *effect*, and not the cause of redeeming mercy, and saving love. And hence, it is fitly said, that "it is not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but of his *mercy* he saveth us, by the renewing of the Spirit," shed on us at Christ's intercession. Hence also it is obvious, *boasting* is excluded. The right or title to life, is "not of works, lest any man should boast ; for we are *his* workmanship," and for our very *obedience*, indebted to his grace. And after our *best* obedience, it becomes us to say, we have conferred no favour. There is nothing in *present* obedience, which atones for the *want* of obedience, from the beginning. And were our *present* obedience *legally* perfect, and our *life* as unexceptionable as our *rule*, we should still be required to say, we have done no more than it was our duty *ever* to have done—*Duty*, and nothing more, even though our forfeited title to life should not be restored. Christ, however, having

expiated our guilt, has *given* eternal life, as well as “the power,” or privilege, “to become the sons of God, to as many as believe on his name.” In acknowledging salvation to be thus altogether of the Lord, Christians offer nothing complimentary, or superfluous to his name. For it is an essential part of their obedience, that they renounce all dependance on their personal righteousness, as a ground of their acceptance. And to be taken off from such dependance, and made to rely wholly on the *atonement* of Christ, is the great work of God. Self-righteousness is incorporated with our very heart’s-blood, and is found often, in as rank luxuriance, in the grossly vicious, as in those of the most Pharisaical exactness. But they who are Christ’s, have crucified this vain conceit. They “count all things loss, for the excellence of the knowledge of *him*,” and freely suffer “the loss of all things,” to be found, having on the righteousness which is of God, by faith in him, who died for our sins, and rose for our justification, and who has become the author of eternal salvation to all them that *obey* him.

III. To perceive, then, the importance of such obedience to happiness, it is only necessary to recollect, that without the *spirit* of obedience, there is no possibility of restoration to the Divine image or friendship, and no evidence, of consequence, of a title to the heavenly inheritance. And without such restoration to God’s image and favour, how *can* a rational being be happy? Will you call that man blessed, who has no earnest of the purchased inheritance—who bears no resemblance to Christ—who has fallen into the condemnation of the Devil—who is alienated from the life of God—who is exposed to die in his sins, and to have a never ending residence and recompense with the enemies of God! Call *himself* happy he may; and he may be so called by a world destitute, like himself, of faith in the *threatenings* of God—but Jesus Christ, pronounces him wretched, miserable, accursed; and we know, that *his* testimony is

true. But “the good man is satisfied from himself.” His own experience teaches him, that to be brought into the honorable relation of a son of God, and to hold in his hand a title to future glory and immortality ; and to possess, in his breast, an earnest of eternal bliss, which sweetens the intercourse of life, and removes the sting of death, is solid good. Likeness of *nature*, begets likeness of *enjoyment*. Is God happy ? so then must his children be. “If any love *me*,” said Christ, him will my Father honor, and where *I* am, there shall my servant be.” Who wears the purple of a thousand realms ? Who wears the sceptre of as many provinces ? Let him try to exchange them, with the christian, for the bliss of one hour’s consciousness of being exalted to virtuous desires ; of resembling the best of beings ; of being allied to God ; for the glory of daring to be a follower of Christ at the hazard of bearing the ignominy of his cross. God forbid we should deny, that in keeping his commandments, at *any* expense, there is great reward. Is there no happiness in the love and pursuit of what is *lovely* ? Is there not *high* satisfaction, in doing right, from right principles—in serving God with good will, on the ground of obvious justice, gratitude and love ? If not, then to be a *christian*, is *not*, as is asserted in the text, to be blessed. But miserable is that man who awards such emptiness to *christian* virtue ; and wretched he, who does not *know* that a consciousness of having done well—of having pleased God—of having performed one *duty* accepted of his Judge—is of more *real* value, than all the glories of earthly conquest, and the homage of the world. To be *good*, rather than great, to be actuated by the motives which adorned all the actions of the Son of God, and to find our victory over sin and the world, complete, at last, through our Lord Jesus Christ ; is to possess “bags which wax not old, a treasure which faileth not, eternal in the heavens.”

1. We learn from our subject, first, that there will be much “weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth,” at the last day. If all are to be placed on the left hand, who choose Christ only as a Saviour from hell, and all who obey him not even in form, as well as all who obey him not indeed and in truth—how great must be the throng, from the Mosque, the Monastery, the Synagogue, the Pagoda, the Temples of Protestant lands, and the habitations of men who have *no* Temple but the world—how great must be the throng, who will be disappointed at the bar of Christ! How vast the multitude to whom he “will profess, I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity!”

2. We perceive, in the next place, what a slender hold *they* have, on the promises of salvation, who make their good works the *basis* of acceptance with a merciful God. The obedience of Christ unto death, is the sole ground of a sinner’s title to the promised inheritance. “Other foundation can no man lay.” Yet the visible Church, and the nominally christian world, are thronged with men, who hope for the mercy of God unto eternal life, only because they have sustained a fair moral character—because, without at all regarding the *temper*, and *spirit*, and *motive* of their actions, they have conformed to the *letter* of the christian precepts. But such conformity is not of the *nature* of obedience. This regards, not only the *form* of the action, but the *spirit* from which it proceeds: so that were obedience, as they suppose, the *ground* of acceptance, they would be as far from salvation on *that* ground, as they are on the principle, that it is indeed good evidence of a title to eternal life. In this view of the subject, it is a peculiar infelicity to be ignorant of the nature, and necessity of the atonement. Such ignorance and unbelief, confident and easy as its subjects are in their security, is an infallible mark of an unhumiliated heart—of a soul unreconciled to God. For *all* men of erroneous sentiments, on the subject of the great salvation, we

have cause to tremble ; but for *this* class, of all others, we have the least ground to hope. They have neither such obedience as the Gospel demands, in evidence of reconciliation to God, nor, by their own testimony, have they *that* faith in Christ, to which the promise of life is graciously made. They have evidently stumbled at the stone which God has laid in Zion for a foundation, and on which (as it is written) he who builds his hopes and works, shall never be confounded. *Such* professing christians, the believer will pity ; for them he will fervently pray ; but this is the *all* which they will allow him to do. Their delusion is, to their hearts, sweeter than Divine wisdom, and their obstinate adherence to it stronger than proof of holy writ. They have ceased to listen to argument, and would rather lose their confidence in the inspiration of the sacred writers, than be convicted of their error and corrected. And should we at last witness concerning them, as of Jerusalem, that the things of their peace are forever hidden from their eyes, we may, indeed, like our compassionate master, weep over their city when we behold its desolation ; but ours will be tears neither of surprise nor of joy.

3. In the third place, our subject forcibly reminds us, of the *weakness*, as well as wickedness of men, who either because they suppose themselves *unable*, or because they suppose obedience *unnecessary* to make their salvation sure, neglect to *do* his commandments. Surely, it is very great weakness to suppose that any man is to be saved *without* obeying the Gospel of Christ, when *he* has explicitly and absolutely declared that such shall be punished with everlasting destruction : and as certainly, it is very gross wickedness, to charge God with having given us commandments, which *he* has put it out of our power to obey, and yet made obedience the criterion of our title to eternal life. This charge fastens on the word of God a palpable contradiction. For he has expressly declared, that a willing mind, is all that he

demands of those who have not the power to do any thing *more* in the way of obedience ; and as we are free, every man is able, at least, to *will* to obey God ; that is, every man possesses the spirit of obedience—the *will* to obey, unless he deliberately prefers *not* to obey. “ He that reproveth God, let him answer it.”

4. We learn, from our subject, the guilt of men who stumble over the sins of professing Christians. If God had said, that all who *professed* to be his people, should prove to be his people, they might be blameless ; but in his word you find it written that “many are called, but few chosen.” To fall over disobedient professors, then, is *your* fault—to give occasion for it by disobedience is *theirs* ; and every man shall bear his own burden.

5. Finally, brethren, how inexcusable, and how doubly wretched shall *we* be, if our expectations are cut off. We have every inducement, and every advantage to labor obediently, that we may be accepted of God. The Apostle and great High Priest of our profession, faithful as the Sun in his course, has shewn us the way to glory, and merited the crown ; we have promised to fight, to overcome, and wear it. “ He cannot deny *himself*.” Let *us* not deny him.—But, adding “to faith, virtue, to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity,” let us abound “in the work of the Lord.” For *doing* “these things, we shall never fall : but so an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” “*Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless, before his presence, with exceeding joy ; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory*” throughout all ages.—*Amen.*

## SERMON IV.



EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION VINDICATED.

PSALM lxxvi. 16.

*Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.*

**H**OW comes it, my brethren, that “the people of the saints of the most high God,” bury in their own breasts, that Grace which has distinguished them from their former selves, and the knowledge of which should be diffused to its author’s praise? How comes it, that the true christian is so diffident of himself, while the false convert, noisy and vain-glorious, proclaims his imagined conversion in every corner of the street, and in the chief places of concourse!—That the one, by an excess of modesty, withholds from God his glory, through fear of self-exaltation; and the other blows the trumpet of his own fame, as if *his* self-wrought righteousness had made him the favorite of heaven. Is not the practice of the one and of the other, alike to be condemned, as contrary to sound doctrine, and an extreme equally to be avoided? So taught the royal penitent, by an example worthy of universal imitation, An example the more com-

manding, as it is that of a man immediately instructed of God, in the duties of piety ; and of a monarch, who had no private and sinister ends to accomplish by such a procedure.

Observe, and profit by, his caution on the one hand ; by his resolute engagedness, on the other, to do honor to his Saviour, and to encourage and animate the fellow-heirs of the inheritance, in search and praise of the treasures of Divine Grace.

Come and hear—not *you*, who neither understand nor value the things of God ;—not *you*, sensual, and profane ! who will only ridicule and scoff at the agency of the Spirit of God. Come and hear—not *you*, victims of prejudice !—not *you*, libertines ! who would turn the grace of God into wantonness, and deride the most sacred and the most thoroughly attested truths of the kingdom of God. Who then are invited, to listen to the methods of *his* operations, who has an invincible and saving influence upon the human heart ? “Come and hear, all ye that fear God”—who can appreciate his mercy, and confide in the testimony of his adopted sons. Others also must have evidence of your concern for *his* honor and for *their* welfare ; but this must arise from your tears and prayers—your instructions and reproofs : it must be given in your zeal to reform them, and in a thousand signs of your solicitude for their salvation. The world must have evidence, that God is in you of a truth, and that you prize his influence ; but this is to be given them, in what alone has weight with the incredulous, the power of a holy example. In your detachment from the objects which engross *them*—in your heavenly-mindedness—in your superiority to the pleasures which captivate, the employments which engage, and the sorrows that depress and overwhelm an earthly mind. Your light will shine convincingly before them, to the glory of the Father, only by this peculiar deportment. These are the means *by* which alone you can

hope to benefit *them*, and this is the testimony you owe to the grace of God in their behalf.

But another object is now before us—It is to *Vindicate the character of* EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION; and to exhibit the advantages to be derived from communion with each other, on this most interesting subject.

The phrase, *experimental religion*, has been introduced into the Christian world, not from choice, but necessity. Not because it is to be admitted, for a moment, that any man possesses, or *can* possess a religious character *without* experience; but because the world have been ever contending for a religion in which the *heart* may be excused a share, or as little as possible, be obliged to participate.

Far is it, however, from the fact, as men who deny Christian experience, would persuade themselves, that it is either opposed to light in the understanding, or in any case exists without it. Equally remote from the truth, is the supposition, that experimental religion is a work of the imagination, without any salutary influence in the regulation of the passions and the conduct. It is, on the contrary, an affection of the heart, productive of the soundest judgment. It is alike remote from a mere speculative knowledge, and an enthusiastic heat of the passions—from a mere theory of sentiment, and a mechanical and unfeeling government of the visible department. The christian is declared, by the author of the faith, to have “the eyes of his understanding enlightened,” and his heart deeply affected: his whole conduct, of consequence, is governed by such an understanding, and such a heart. The speculative christian, *assents* to the truths of revealed religion; the experimental christian goes a step farther, and *tastes* and sees that these truths and their author are good. The mechanical christian, frames his doings by statutes, written with ink, engraven on stone, and perceived **only** by the eye; the experimental

christian has them written, by the Spirit of the living God, on the fleshly tables of the heart. Every truth of the gospel, of consequence, becomes, in the highest sense, *knowledge*. He knows that God is worthy of supreme love, because, in addition to the conclusion of his understanding, he has the verdict of his *heart*. He knows himself to be a sinner, not merely because he perceives the difference between the precepts of the law, and his conduct; but because he *feels* his vileness. He knows the necessity, the value, and the sufficiency of the Redeemer, not merely because this statement meets his eye, in a revelation which is proved to be from God; but also, because he has felt most keenly the *need* of such a Saviour, and has embraced him in his affections. Thus the very image of the objects, presented him in the word of God, is formed upon his heart, and becomes analogous to that of natural objects formed on the retina of the eye. Let the rationalist now, compare the notions a blind man obtains of the objects of vision, by description, with those of the man, who from actual inspection describes them: or rather, let him imagine the blind man restored to sight, and he will perceive the propriety of the affirmation, that religion without experience can be no more said to exist in the human breast, than a landscape to possess beauties in the view of him who is without the organs of vision.—Conceive what such a man, on being restored to sight, would tell you of what had been done for his eyes, and judge, from this feeble illustration, what a christian must be able to say, God has done for his soul.

Permit me to ask then whether there be any thing irrational, or unfriendly to the human intellect, in maintaining the necessity of an experimental acquaintance with divine truth? Is it possible for Omnipotence to open the blind eye, and fill the soul with delight in perceiving the beautiful objects with which it is surrounded—and is it *not* possible so to

enlighten the understanding, and move the heart, as to give reality and excellence to the religion of the gospel! May he not thus impart knowledge and pleasure, through the medium of the understanding and affections, with as much facility, as through the medium of corporeal vision! The Jew may doubt, and the malignant blaspheme, but he who has *experienced* such an operation will tell you, in either case, “whereas I was blind I now see:”—and to doubt his testimony, or charge him with delusion, is a proof, not of superior wisdom or penetration, but of deplorable ignorance. The man has made trial, and by experiment proved the truth of the description which has been given him, and you call him a visionary and enthusiast. You have declined the experiment, and yet put in an exclusive claim to reason. Your claim shall be respected, when you trust your ship with the landsman who never tried his skill upon the ocean—when you commit your case to the novice, who never advocated a cause—when you lease out your farm to a man who has spent his life in studying the books of husbandry, without once engaging in the labors of the field. Till then, all candid men will agree, that he is the visionary who denies the necessity, or laughs at the testimony of *EXPERIENCE*. And if, even in the little concerns of a world which is passing away—if, for objects of comparatively trivial and insignificant character, *experience* alone obtains respect:—if, even in Philosophy, whom the rationalist hails as the daughter of the skies, that alone which is experimental obtains the regard of wise men:—if only that administration obtains confidence, which employs experienced statesmen in the cabinet, and experienced generals in the field:—if, in the most common concerns of business, experience is an essential qualification of the men we employ—how preposterous, how opposed to common sense, the assertion, that it is of little account, or even worse than useless, in the greatest of all con-

cerns—the Christian Religion ! Inexperience in commercial concerns, has ruined its thousands. Inexperience in the affairs of the state, has destroyed empires ; and inexperience in religion, will delude to perdition a world of souls. Yes, a world of souls ! for once in thirty years, more than six hundred millions of human beings die—and of these, not a sixth part have even the *theory* of true religion : and of this sixth, how great a proportion deride as visionary.—and how much greater, professedly *know* nothing of *experimental piety* !

To vindicate it therefore, is to take the part of Jesus Christ against the powers of darkness.

Much is said, by the sober part of mankind, in behalf of *practical* religion ; and too much in its favor never *can* be said : but let it not be forgotten that practical religion, depends entirely upon that which is experimental. We cannot take a step in our practice, acceptable to God, if our *ultimate end* be wrong—and how can our *motives* be right, without any experience of the love of truth ! All experience worthy of the name may be comprehended in the love of God, shed abroad in the heart. Without this, a very different kind of experience has always shown us, that we are the mere sport of passion. Pride, ambition and selfishness, in some of their multiform shapes, give an impulse to every movement of the soul, and, whatever be the *form* of our actions, necessarily render both us and them, an abhorrence in the eyes of him, who looketh, not on the outward appearance, but the heart. Hence it is, that the form of religion may exist, and *does* exist often, in men who deny its power, leaving them the servants of corruption. Hence too, those innumerable errors which have filled the visible church with contention and discord, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, men who have failed to secure that good thing—a heart established with grace—by founding their practice

upon experience. That love, which prompts a man to do the will of God, the knowledge of which, is to be acquired only by experience, is alone an infallible security against fatal error. It is only by the knowledge of our weakness, our corruption, our dependance, and our obligations, that we learn to walk humbly with God. But this is a knowledge, which books will never teach us, and be our practice what it may, without such knowledge we can have no communion with God.

The most bigotted men the world has ever beheld, belong to that class, who oppose practical, to experimental religion—who go through all the forms of justice, beneficence, public and secret worship, with the organs of the body, while their hearts are destitute of the spirit of Christ. And if any men could have right to be bigotted, they, of all men would be best entitled to it: for who would not be tenacious of his forms, and wedded to his practice as the one thing needful, when it constitutes the whole of his religion! But of what value is it? Nothing which we do without respect for God, though the form, or matter of the action, be perfectly unexceptionable, has any thing of the nature of religion. It has of course an essential defect of a rational, no less than of a religious, act: and to be attached to such a service, and to lay such a stress on it, is of the very nature of bigotry, which like persecution and blind zeal, is opposed to the genius and spirit of christianity.

Hence it is, that the life of a christian is said to be “hid with Christ.” It is a life, in its essential peculiarities, hidden, not only as its nature is spiritual and of course invisible, but as it is wholly unknown to the world, who, having no experience of the hopes, and joys, and sorrows, and motives, and feelings, of a christian, cannot be supposed to appreciate them; and this is one of the soundest reasons for calling upon them who *fear* God, in distinction from the wicked, to

listen to those testimonies of divine Grace, which the true christian is ready to impart, not as his boast, but for the honor of the divine mercy.

Finally, that there can be no such thing as practical religion without experimental, is obvious from the fact, that the gospel on all its pages, declares that every motive and every grace of the christian, from which acceptable conduct proceeds, is the fruit of divine mercy, and the gift of God. Suffer me now to ask, this being true, whether, in the nature of things, it be possible that God should impart to the soul of man these graces, and *he* not know it, or, in other words, not experience it. Are our hearts made of such insensible stuff, that they may be changed from the love of the world to the love of God, without any *consciousness* of such a change? Can a man awake from a state of apathy—can he change the objects of his chief affection and pursuit—his studies—his companions—and his fondest expectations—can any operation indeed, of so interesting, and affecting a nature, be performed, as shall give his whole practice a new character—and he himself, be said to have had no experimental acquaintance with such an operation! If this is too absurd to be alleged, then it must either be denied that any such operation is necessary, and so the whole gospel be rejected; or it must be admitted, that experimental religion is an essential preparative for that which is practical, and that they cannot in any case have a separate and independent existence. Let us put away then that incredulity, and above all, that derisive smile, implying a fiend-like malice, which is sometimes excited at the mention of experimental religion. Without experience, religion is but a chimera; and without a substantial and cordial religion, man is lost forever! We have endeavoured to vindicate the character of experimental religion—

II. Let us look, in the next place, at the benefits which

its subjects may derive, from communicating to each other, the methods and the influence of divine grace upon their hearts. Far be it from me to recommend that ostentatious and self-righteous boast of one's own favors; or even that humble, but ill timed disclosure of our personal experiences, which characterize but too many of every christian country. He who said, on one occasion, "go home and show thy friends how great things the Lord hath done for thee;" said, on another, "see thou tell no man." But there are times, when it would be ungrateful to keep silence; there are occasions, when reserve would be something more than modesty. While the heavens declare the glory of God, and the lower world, in all its animate and inanimate portions, unite with one voice, to celebrate his goodness; it would be an outrage, for him who is endowed with the gift of speech, and whose lips the Lord has opened—for whom he has done more than for the whole creation beside, never to show forth his praise, *by declaring* what has been done for him.

The confession in the text, is, like that of all men taught of God, a direct acknowledgment, that the soul derives all its virtue, hope, and happiness from the grace of God. Instead, therefore, of swelling the heart of man with pride, nothing has a more direct tendency to clothe it with humility. Gratitude to God, then, demands of us at times, a personal testimony to his rich and sovereign goodness. Hence, the chiefest of the Apostles, has given us an example of such humility and gratitude.—"By the grace of God I am what I am;" and though unknown, by face, to the churches of Judea, they, on hearing of his conversion to the faith he once laboured to destroy, glorified God in him. The people, beholding the man whose sins Jesus had forgiven, were amazed, and glorified God. When Cornelius, having called his friends about him, related to them and to the Apostle, the story of God's distinguishing mercy to his soul, they

were all filled with gratitude and praise ; while the Apostle, in the audience of them all, proclaimed the largeness and impartiality of the divine goodness to Gentiles and to Jews.

Who is not filled with admiration of the divine bounty, when he sees Jehovah opening his hand, and supplying the wants of every living thing :—when he beholds him as the great Father of all, vindicating the cause of the oppressed, and pleading for the fatherless and widow :—when, by his mysterious providence, he delivers the innocent, and defeats the designs of malice ; and through the very means they employ to *devastate*, promotes the increase, stability, and happiness of the earth ! But all this—worthy of a God as it is—all this, is nothing, compared with the triumphs of his grace, overcoming even his enemies, subduing malignity by love, reforming the headstrong, pardoning the guilty, and out of corruption itself, creating a spirit in his own likeness, and qualifying it to bless mankind, to enjoy the pleasures of his kingdom, and to glorify his name forever. Who can witness, much more *feel*, such effects of the stupendous work of redeeming and sanctifying love, without a heart to praise, or a tongue to utter the memory of so great goodness ?

What think you of the man, who, though rescued from poverty, despair, and death, by the disinterested efforts of a generous stranger, never makes an acknowledgment, save when he can steal into his solitude—never speaks to others of the kindness he has received, nor suffers his *friends* to know to whom he is indebted for his competence ! Is he an ingrate ? How much more the man who confines to his own bosom, his obligations to his maker !—Whom, when a stranger to God and to himself, grace made so great a debtor, by discovering to him the plague of his heart, and by leading him, for refuge from justice and from guilt, to the

cross of Jesus Christ, and to the hope set before him in the Gospel—conquered his attachment to idols, rescued him from the prison of despair, and secured to him the freedom of the city of God! Ought not such a man, to overcome his irresolution, or timidity, and to do honor to his deliverer? Ought he not to give to him “who asketh him, a reason of the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear?” Thus indeed *man* is abased, but his *Saviour* is exalted. Not only gratitude to God, but—

2. In the next place, the edification of the church, requires it. The great “diversity of operation,” which is expressly ascribed to the “same spirit,” and which produces the same results in every breast in which it dwells, can be known, only by such communication. But as in all this variety, the wisdom of God is illustrated, and our views of his goodness extended, and even our charity enlarged, it is of no small *importance*, that christians speak freely, at some time, one to another. Nor is it merely edifying, it is *animating* also. Did you never witness the interest excited in the youthful soldier’s breast, when the faithful veteran has given the narrative of his early conflicts, and, forgetting his wounds, started from his seat, “shouldered his crutch, and shown *how* fields were won?” So the young convert kindles, and his hope lights up, when, in his experience, the aged christian spreads before him all the way in which God has led him, from the commencement of his pilgrimage. He gains something, even from the story of his doubts, and fears, and falls. Good men love to hear of the operations of divine grace. And it is not an idle curiosity which wakes their attention; nor is it gratified without a good practical influence, when the reports of these operations are judiciously, and seasonably interchanged. When tidings came to the church of Jerusalem, of the power of God through the preaching of the Apostles at Antioch, Barnabas

was dispatched to learn its operation and extent ; who, when he had arrived, and witnessed the grace of God, was glad. It inspires love to the generous benefactor, to hear the tale of the miserable whom he has relieved ; and excites confidence too, in him who needs similar relief, to go to him with increased hope of obtaining like benefits. The history of the christian soldier, gives fortitude to the mind meeting the same temptations and conflicts. The example of those who have embarked, with all their stores, in the cause of righteousness, and who have been enabled to adorn the doctrine of the Saviour, and to bless mankind, animates the soul to virtue ; and when we learn the means, by which God has wrought such excellence in men, new thoughts are conceived, new confirmation of faith, and hope, and patience, are added : we melt with sympathy, we grow emulous, and our hearts ascend to God in praise. Thus the wonderful works of God, and the verity of his word, and the truth of his promises, and the whole mystery of redeeming and saving love, in its application to man, is developed ; and we are consoled as well as animated, and purified as well as transported, at what God has done for the soul. Yes christians ! these narratives have moistened, with tears of gladness, the furrowed cheek ; and proved the means, of spiritual good to many souls. And thus to warm, and elevate—to ennoble, and invigorate each others' hearts, is not merely to give a *theatrical* representation of human happiness, and human woes : it is not to beget the lean pleasures of the player's hero, but to depict the realities of life, and yield the soul a permanent benefit in its pilgrimage to heaven. For one truth, built upon actual experience, or derived from it, has a force and virtue, worth ten thousand merely speculative. Man may, indeed, very rationally take for true, the testimony of Christ, on the external evidence alone ; but no confirmation is to be compared with that, produced by the corres-

pondence of our own hearts' testimony, with his declarations. The similar experience of another, increases the force of evidence; and thus the heirs of life are mutual fellow-helpers to the kingdom of God, and are made to hold fast their confidence unto the end. Thus charity, while she seeketh not her own, is kind; and while never puffed up, edifieth her neighbor.

3. Finally, at some time to follow the example in the text, is requisite to command the charity of the Church for ourselves. Charity cannot believe without evidence; nor consider that man a Christian, whose claim has no other support, than that he sits at the table of the Lord, and is neither a glutton nor a drunkard. The evidence she asks, is to be obtained, only by a comparison of our professions with our actions. If God has done *nothing* for our souls, *no* kind of life can afford evidence that we are Christians: for religion has its commencement, its progress, and its influence in the soul. If a spirit of holiness be in-wrought in our breasts, and the high and lofty One has taken up his dwelling there, we shall give no false representations, and our life will not belie the tale we tell. Without the evidence of such a profession, and a corresponding life, how are we to enjoy that personal friendship—that holy fellowship, which, next to communion with God, is essential to constitute a Church of Christ? That most important of all relative duties—the exercise of love to the brethren—inculcated so frequently by the Saviour, and insisted on so much in the Gospel, as the essential evidence of our discipleship, cannot be performed towards men of whose Christian character we have *no* evidence, from *any* quarter: And from no quarter *can* it come, if it be never even declared, that God has done any thing for our souls. Such a declaration, to confidential friends at least, fails not to lay a foundation for Christian communion, if the life be right; and to engage

the affection or charity of all, who, through those friends, receive the evidence of our discipleship. By such an interchange of views, and such a disclosure of divine operations upon their hearts, the Christian fraternity are attracted to each other; and kindly affectioned, and charitably united, constitute part of that blessed family, who, having one Lord, one faith, one hope, are distinguished from every other community; loving one another, out of a pure heart fervently, subordinate, in all things, to Jesus Christ.

If then, as we have endeavored to evince, experimental religion be essential to a Christian life, a happy death, and a glorious immortality—if gratitude to God, the highest usefulness to the Church, and charity to ourselves, demand of us, a seasonable and judicious report, of the methods of divine grace with our souls—the proper IMPROVEMENT of this subject, demands of Christians, an inquiry at the door of their own hearts, whether they have not received the grace of God in vain!

Are there not some without the Church, who have smothered in their own breast, that goodness of God, which, for the honor of his name, should have been inscribed on his altar? Are there not others, who have grown old in waiting at the posts of his house, without a single deliberate, and honest investigation, of the causes which have led them to profess the religion of Christ, and to eat and drink with his friends at the sacramental table? Are there not still more, who, though able to give a reason of the hope that is in them, decline, from motives which will never bear the light, that free, but unostentatious communication with their fellow christians, on the subject of their personal religion, which is authorized by the best examples in the word of God; and which is withheld at the sacrifice of their own usefulness, the interests of the church, and the glory of their supreme benefactor?

While we are all induced, by a consideration of this too much neglected topic, to make a thorough personal examination of our interest in it ; let us remember, that Christ has most significantly said, that “no man lighteth a candle to put it under a corn measure”—and that if God has done any thing for our souls, worthy of *our* gratitude and *his* grace, he has done it—not for *our pleasure* merely, but for the glory of his own name.

## SERMON V.



EVERY MAN'S BUSINESS.

1st THESSALONIANS, iv, 11.

*But we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more, and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.*

**T**HE *profession* of Christianity, is a profession of love to God and man; but Christianity *itself*, is the *influence* of such love in the heart, producing the fruits of righteousness. And this fact serves to explain the commendation in the context—"As touching brotherly love, ye have no need that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another; and indeed ye do it towards all the brethren which are in Macedonia; but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase in these fruits of love more and more"—that ye *excel* in this grace, being manifestly under its influence in *all* the actions of life, little as well as great, common as well as peculiar; never allowing yourselves to be governed by selfish and base motives, nor confining your love within narrow limits; but extending it wider and farther—acquiring such a habit of doing every thing from the influence of this grace—that it shall be evident that all you say, and all you

do, and all you refrain from doing and saying, is the effect of that kindness, forgiveness, forbearance, and compassion, which shone so conspicuously in all the conduct of your divine Master. Among the fruits of this love, is an ambition to be *useful*, and not a burden to the church; and a fervent desire to perform all our duties, to our families, to our neighbours, and to the community; and by all the habits of a quiet, peaceable, industrious and godly life, to adorn the Christian profession. There is no other way to live honestly and contentedly—to avoid the evils of poverty, and a taxing of others for our support; and to lay up something for distribution among the unfortunate, the needy, the sick; and for extending the gospel to the destitute. No voluntarily idle man is an *honest* man; and no *dishonest* man has any thing of Christian charity. He defrauds the community of services to which they are entitled from him; and takes the surest means to bring himself into a state of dependance on others. The duty of diligence in business, therefore, is, with christians, a fruit of love; and it is enjoined, that ye may walk *honestly* toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing. To enforce this duty, is the single object of the present discourse.

1. And in the first place, in order to observe this injunction, and keep the precept as it has been delivered to us, it is necessary that every man in the community should *have* business of his own. Man is an *active*, and an *imitative* animal; and if *love* do not employ him, the opposite passion *will*. He will serve some master; and it will be God or Sin. He will *imitate* some one; and it will be the useful, or the mischievous man. These are truths so obvious from our own observation, as to require no illustration. If man has no calling of his own, nor regular, stated occupation, it is impossible he should be "*quiet*." The activity of the human mind is such, that without employment, it is sure to

prey upon *itself*—to become restless, discontented, and uneasy ; and never fails to become, by a chosen necessity, a busy body in other men's matters. Experience has always taught, that employment is absolutely necessary to one's own *enjoyment*, as well as to his *usefulness* to others ; and the wisdom and goodness of God are alike conspicuous, in so constituting man, that an *idle*, shall always be a *wretched* life : and mankind have very generally agreed, at least in *theory*, to denounce such a life, as mischievous to society. The Apostle, therefore, with very manifest propriety, has severely reproved all of both sexes, however easy their circumstances, who indulge themselves in sloth. Nay, he has gone so far as to say, that such persons are unworthy of our countenance and our alms. “If any will not *work*, neither shall they eat.” The law given to Adam, is binding upon *all* men, in the *spirit*, though not in the *letter*—“In the sweat of thy brow, thou shalt eat thy bread.” In disobedience to this law, on the most generous construction, man becomes a nuisance to society. A great proportion of the convicts in our public places of confinement, are found to be from that class of men, who have ceased to be diligent in their lawful calling ; or, who never had any. The door of the heart being once opened by indolence, the most urgent temptations to dishonesty and crime, enter in : and if all indolent men do not reach these places of confinement, it is not because they are without crime, but because their crimes are of such a nature that the secular law has no cognizance of them ; or because the ingenuity of man contrives to evade the law. The Apostle very clearly intimates, that wherever there is wanting in men, a disposition to diligence in business, mischief follows. For no sooner had he said to the church in Thessalonica, “we commanded, when we were with you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat”—than he adds ; “for we hear that there are some among you which

walk *disorderly*, not working at all, but are busy bodies," that is, busy in doing nothing to good purpose. In the one sex, gossiping was their trade; and in both, an intermeddling in the private concerns of their neighbors. Far indeed from *this*, was the character of the church in Thessalonica *generally*—yet some such, the Apostle found in it, when he visited them; and therefore, when he wrote his second Letter to them, he commanded and exhorted them, by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they should labour, and eat the bread of their own industry; and he bade the church to note the persons who refused obedience to this injunction, and avoid their company, that they might be ashamed;—and, by this means, be led to walk more worthy of the Christian name. This is the fruit of genuine love—to reclaim men from their faults, instead of covering them over by a spurious liberality. This is the charity, which hides a multitude of sins, without countenancing any. It is *injustice* to the *really* infirm and needy, for a man to refuse to do *his* part, as the idle man obliges himself to do, towards their relief. It is kindness to the indolent, therefore, as well as to the *indigent*, to persuade them, by all lawful means, to *have* business of their own; and to note, as disorderly walkers, them who disobey this Apostolic command.

It is, therefore, an example of the greatest tenderness of reproof, to say with the Apostle—"Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands." It is better to engage in the most laborious and servile employment, if it be an *honest* one, than to rob God, and the community, of our active powers of body or mind: and far more honorable to ourselves, and ornamental to the human character, to be useful *servants*, than princely and idle *masters*. And generally it is true, that the *poor*, honest laborer, is far more *useful*, and by means of his alms, more

generous too, than the idle speculator, who often grows rich by artifice, and not by diligence in business.

It is evident then, that it is the will of God, that every man should *have* business of his own, sufficient to employ his time, and to occupy his mind : both to prevent him from being hurtful and unhappy ; and also, to render him a blessing to his family and to the community. Happy would it be for society, could every man be persuaded to employ himself *fully*, even should he by so doing, earn but a poor subsistence ; and far better for the individual, however independent his circumstances, than to be earning *nothing*.

2. In the second place, it is absolutely necessary, in order to obey this precept, not only that a man actually *have* business of his own, but that he *know what his business is*—that is, that he ascertain accurately, what properly belongs to *him*, in the various relations of life, in distinction from the concerns of others. God has given every one of us, some work to do ; and by the one, or many talents, given us to occupy for *him*, and by the character of those talents, has indicated, with sufficient clearness, in what sphere of action, it is his will we should be employed. Men, I am aware, sometimes *mistake* their calling, and such men are to be pitied. But ordinarily, as the mind develops itself, we discover to what avocations God has adapted our minds, and what calling he would have us pursue ; and such is his wisdom and goodness, that very few, among all mankind, are fit for *nothing*. Every rational creature, if he be *willing*, may be useful in the church, and in the world, in a greater or less degree. But no *one* mind is fit for *every* thing. To avoid interference with *others* therefore, and to avoid the reproach of taking too much upon ourselves, it is of vast importance, that we should know *ourselves*, and the duties to which we are called in every relation of life. The man in *private* life who imagines himself qualified to counsel Coun-

sellors, and teach Senators wisdom, may easily put his opinion to the test by waiting till the providence of God, and the voice of the country, *call* him to the duty : and the man of secular business, who sets himself up as the instructor, or censor of the Christian Ministry, may readily ascertain whether God has appointed him to this service, by humbly studying the precepts and injunctions of the gospel. There is no insuperable difficulty in knowing what our proper business *is*, provided we are willing to be *confined* to it. But when once the lofty imagination takes possession of a man's mind, that the whole burden of regulating society—and all the weight of care, belonging to every department of government, civil and ecclesiastical—and all the business of men of other professions, rests upon *him* ; it is unavoidable, that he should be ignorant of his own proper calling, and that he should become a busy-body in other men's matters. This illustration is sufficient to show the importance of knowing *ourselves*, and of diligently studying the christian precepts, in order to restrain us from *neglecting our duties* on the one hand, and from interfering with the concerns of our neighbors, on the other. I am sensible that it often requires a nice discernment, to guard against falling into one or the other of these errors—that vanity and self love, on the one side, urge us on beyond the bounds of duty ; and that on the other the fear of being thought officious, and of intermeddling without warrant, draws us back from an attempt to do good, where we have it in our power. Still, the business of man in his several relations is so well defined in the gospel, that it far oftener happens, that we transgress those bounds, or come short of them, for want of consideration, and want of righteousness, than through involuntary mistake concerning what love to God, and love to man, requires of us. If, for example, I see a man about to drown himself, or to set fire to my neighbour's dwelling,

selfishness may lead me to say, with Cain, I am not my brother's keeper; but common sense teaches me, as well as the law of love to my neighbour, that it is my business, if possible, to prevent the threatened calamity; though I am neither a magistrate, nor natural guardian to him, who is about to incur, or to do the mischief. It is necessary therefore to know what properly belongs to us as men, as neighbours, as citizens, as parents, as children, as christians, in order to escape, on the one hand, the reproach of meddling with that which belongeth not to us; and to avoid, on the other, the omission of the most sacred duties. The Apostle Peter is a beacon to christians on this subject; and when he asked the Lord concerning John, "Lord, what shall this man do?" Jesus answered, to his discomfiture—"What is that to thee?" To incur such a rebuke from the Son of God, must, on a mind of religious sensibility, produce such a loss of self-esteem, as none of the pleasures of officiousness can ever compensate.

3. But in the third place, to have business of our own, and to ascertain with clearness and satisfaction what God would have us to do, is not enough, unless we are willing and desirous to *confine* ourselves to it.

There is a precept therefore, for *all* men, of universal bearing, and nearly parallel with the text.—It requires us to be, not *slothful*, but diligent in our business: increasing more and more, in that love to God which is the fulfilling of the command—That ye study to be quiet, and *mind* your own business—that every one of us attend faithfully to what belongs to *him*, and not to that which is, more properly, another man's. To enforce this precept, let us consider—First, that we have no *time* to spare, to do other men's business. God has given every man a great work to do for *himself*; and has lent him no more time, than is necessary, with all the diligence he can use, to accomplish it. His duties

to his family, to his country, and to mankind, both secular and religious; as well as his duty to his *own soul*, and to God, if faithfully performed, can leave him no leisure for doing *another's* work: and whoever attempts it, necessarily *neglects* his own, or does it ill. And, as "every one of us shall give account of *himself* to God," of every idle word, and idle hour, and injurious interference in the concerns of his neighbor, it is a very serious mischief to *one's self*, if to no *other*, to be adjudged a busy body in other men's matters. We hear this kind of meddling spoken of with levity, or with wrath, and treat it as a venial error, and a light thing; but it will not be so regarded, in the day of retribution. When it shall be found, that the *soul* has been neglected, through inattention, or contempt of this precept. When God makes inquisition of a man, as of Adam, where art thou, and what hast thou done?—When he shall ask, hast thou kept thine heart with all diligence, and is the soul, committed to thee, *safe*?—And it shall be answered, it is lost: for as thy servant was busy here and there it was gone—then the crime of doing other men's business, and neglecting our own, will be discovered in its fatal consequences, and its folly and guilt will be seen in its author's ruin. Then, the secret will be revealed, which man has so little curiosity *now* to learn, that those who complain that they have no *time* to attend to religion, were straitened, only because, in doing the business of *others*, they squandered the time which should have been employed in performing their *own*. So true is that saying of the Apostle, "let every man prove his *own* work, then he shall have rejoicing in *himself*, and not in another." What motive, more powerful, can we reasonably ask, to produce in us a diligent attention to our "own business," and to lead us to a faithful performance of our several duties?

There is, however, another argument, worthy of equal,

may, of superior influence, presented us in the example of Jesus Christ. He has not left us to the naked command of God, or to his own most wise and holy injunction; but has left us an *example*, that we should walk in his steps. He was *seasonably* engaged about his Father's business, and always duly solicitous to finish the work which was given him to do. He *loved* his own proper work, and did it; and was, for this, pronounced "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." And though importuned by one of his hearers—who perceived that he spoke with great authority, so that all nature obeyed him—to interpose and command an unjust brother to divide his Father's estate with him, he utterly declined, saying; "Man! who made *me* a judge or divider over *you*." O! how unlike those officious, prating men, who are always ready to divide the rich man's property for him—who clamor against the legacies and bequests of the dead, who had a right to do what they would with their own—and who intermeddle, in every affair of Church and State, of neighborhoods and societies, in which they have no command, with which they have no connexion, and concerning which, their censorious and complaining voice ought never to be heard. Such, are not the followers of Christ; or they follow him so far off, that it is to be feared they will never overtake him. Surely, to imitate his example, they have *one* sin to break off, which they have not yet repented of—one sin to confess, and forsake, which they hardly believe to be a sin—before they can reasonably hope to find forgiveness. And this sin, my brethren, most commonly exists, and prevails, in communities who suffer most, for want of employment. Wo, therefore, to them, who say, like the wasteful steward, from mere indolence, "I cannot dig."

Jesus Christ very frequently reminded his disciples, of the shortness of his time—the nearness of his departure out of

the world—and of the necessity of being *earnestly*, and *constantly* engaged, to complete the service he came into the world to perform. This was reason enough, for declining to do the work of others. But it is a reason which as much applies to *us*, and ought as much to affect and influence *us*, as it did the Saviour of the world. His example, in this respect, has all the force of a *law*, and who can say he *loves* him, while he yet strives not, in this particular, to be like him. Brethren, let us not love in word, or in tongue merely, but in deed and in truth.

But there are, perhaps, some men who will not be influenced by *either* of the motives already suggested—who, notwithstanding, are capable of being moved by other considerations. To all such, I would suggest the necessity of being diligent in their own proper business, in order to being good citizens. All men agree, whether they believe in Christ, or not, that those who are most uniformly governed by the precepts of the gospel, make the most peaceable, and useful members of society:—and none of my hearers, I trust, are so lost, as to say, they are willing to be either *mischievous*, or *useless* members of the community. Yet surely, every man is *worse* than useless, who serves neither God nor man. And to serve God is impossible, but by keeping his commandments; and it is no less impossible, to do any good to the community, or not to do it harm, by neglecting our *own* concerns, and obstructing other men, in *theirs*. Admitting that there is *less* encouragement than formerly, to honest industry, yet it is better for *society*, and better for *one's self*, to labour without a full reward for his services, than to do *nothing*; and far better than to do *hurt*.\* And to mar the peace, and interrupt the work of others, is the natural con-

\* This Discourse was preached, when the community was suffering under commercial depression.

sequence of having no work of our own. Those among the Athenians, who spent their time in doing nothing, but to hear and tell what was going on among their neighbors, are mentioned, by the author of the Acts of the Apostles, with an expression which implies a severe censure of their idleness. And then, it is to be remembered, that the less the *reward* for labour, the more diligence is necessary to procure an adequate subsistence. There always have been periods, in the history of every people, when discouragements to enterprise and industry have produced strong temptations to idleness. But he that fainteth in such days of adversity, his strength is small. "There is a tide in the affairs of men," and when the current sets *against* us, it will certainly carry us away, if we do not labour the harder against it. And he who refuses to tug at the oar, because that tide is against him, is entitled to the character, neither of a wise, nor faithful servant. The hand of GOD moves this tide, and we can control our own destiny, no further than we submit alike to his providential and preceptive will.

Inasmuch, then, as we are forbidden to enter into temptation, and *when* tempted, forbidden to submit without resistance, we should avoid alike the indolence which is the parent of temptation to officiousness, to censoriousness, and consequently to strife and every evil work; and whether we wish to honor Christ, or to bless mankind—to dwell in heaven, or to be useful on earth—to escape ruin *ourselves*, or avoid harming others—let us listen to the injunction of the text, and to the entreaty of Apostolic love, that we increase more and more, in the same moral excellence, studying to be quiet and peaceable, minding each one his own business, as God has commanded us, and so the God of love and peace will be with us.

This subject may be applied with peculiar force to those who neglect any duty on the ground of their dependance.

We are as dependant on God for our disposition to work, as for our disposition to repent of our sins ; and yet, if any man will not work, the Apostle says, neither shall he eat ; and all honest men fully subscribe to the equity of this judgment. In like manner, God says to every sinner, however dependant for a right disposition—except he repent he shall perish ; and with equal readiness, we ought to perceive and feel, and subscribe to the righteousness of this decision. Judge, then, of your ownelves, ye who condemn the idle vagrant or busy body, who excuses his sin because God has not given him a better disposition, whether, in so doing, you do not judge and condemn yourselves, for neglecting your duty because you have not the disposition to do it !

## SERMON VI.



A FUNERAL SERMON ON THE LIVING.

PSALM xlix. 17.

*When he dieth he shall carry nothing away : his glory shall not descend after him.*

**H**EAR this, all ye people ! Give ear to it, all the inhabitants of the world—both low and high, rich and poor together : for the conviction of it shall be wisdom, and the meditation of it shall be understanding. Let the wise of this world hear it ; for *they* must die. Let the fool and the brutish person hear it ; for they likewise shall perish. Let the rich hear it, whose inward thought is, that their houses shall continue forever ; and the ambitious, who call their lands after their own names ; and let their posterity hear it, who approve their sayings, and boast themselves in the multitude of their possessions : for they too, like sheep, are to be laid in the grave, and their beauty is to consume, afar from their dwelling. And, bless his soul who will, while he lives, and praise him, as men may, while he does well for himself, each of them shall go to the generation of his fathers ; and they who are in honor, and without under-

standing, shall never see light. For when a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish. I press this consideration *now*, because now, no evil imputation will divert the attention from the subject, to him who urges it:—because, when an *unchristian* acquaintance dies, our mouths, in relation to his character and state, are sealed in silence. Delicacy and tenderness toward the living forbid us to *say*, what we unavoidably think; and an apprehension, that we can benefit the living as little as the dead, constrains us to sigh in secret; and sometimes, perhaps, prevents us from uttering what we ought. A regard to the feelings of surviving friends, and a fear of tearing wider the wound which death has opened, checks our resolution to make the wisest use of the improvidence of the dead, and restrains us from applying the important truths of which it forcibly reminds us.

These considerations, connected with the fear of concealing from mortals the most interesting facts, induce me to anticipate the funeral of the impenitent, and to say in his *hearing*, rather than at his grave, what would then be to *him* unavailing—what may now be profitable unto *all*.

Imagine yourself then, child of the world, and slave of sin! imagine yourself stretched upon the bier; and your soul, hovering, unseen, around these walls, and listening to the voice of God, which now addresses you:—“When he dieth, he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him.” Conceive, in short, that you are hearing your own *funeral sermon*; and make application of it to your present character and state: and the Spirit of God, perhaps, may make it the means of awakening you to righteousness—of saving *your* soul from remorse, and that of some surviving friend from anguish.

There—in such case we should say, looking anxiously around upon the assembly—there lies the body of a worldling! One who loved not God—one of the number who

often sat with us in the place of worship, to hear the word. He was one of those favored few in our miserable world, who heard the messages of salvation; who were instructed in the duties of Christianity, warned of the deceitfulness of sin, and taught the way to life and immortality. But he was a sinner. He loved the world; and in the earth, and the rubbish of earthly good, he buried all his thoughts. The love of the Father was not in him. He saw, in the Saviour of sinners, no beauty that he should desire him; and he was a stranger to the duties and pleasures of communion with a reconciled God. Such is the character over which we mourn. He laid up many treasures on earth, but he failed to secure a mansion, and a portion, in the kingdom of heaven. In an unexpected hour, God has summoned him to judgment; and *we* are left to profit by the reflections the event has suggested, and to meditate on such a character and such an end!

Let us now collect ourselves—Let us coolly look over all of his possessions, native and acquired, and all which could have delighted him, and see how the word of God is verified;—how, of all the treasures he had amassed, and of all the glory he had gotten, nothing has descended after him, nothing has been carried with him, to nourish and comfort him in the country to which he has departed.

1. In the first place, those exterior accomplishments, to the acquisition of which, he successfully devoted the morning of his days, are lost to him forever. To his native comeliness of form, and beauty of proportions, he added, by an assiduous cultivation of his manners, all that is graceful in the person, and winning in the beholder's eye. He moved with elegance in the dance, charmed the social circle with the ease and gracefulness of his conversation; and every instrument of music, lost its power of attraction, in the superior sweetness of his song. Festive joys, and their

commanding influence, were all overlooked by means of the presence of this convivial guest ; and even sensibility forgot her pleasures, and envy hissed in secret, because of the acknowledged charms of his society.

But the evil day has come : his sun has set : his native beauty is consumed as a moth-eaten garment. Those sprightly limbs move no more in the dance, and all the daughters of music are brought low. The door of the guest-chamber no more opens to receive him—his tongue is no longer the pen of a ready writer—the spirit has returned to God who gave it, and the mourners go about the streets. And is not *he* a mourner too ? What, of all these accomplishments, has he carried with him to the grave ; and what, of all the glory they yielded him, has descended with him to the tomb ! Senseless as any other heap of earth, there lies his body—and yonder, stripped of all its glory, empty and naked, flits away the soul.

2. But let us suppose, in the second place, that he had gotten all the means of pleasure ; and, initiated into the mysteries of her court, knew how to give sensitive gratification its highest relish. He had learned to make all his senses, the inlets of high enjoyment ; and to exclude, from an entrance into his heart, whatever of sober thought, and saddening influence, checked the current of delight. He had learned to evade the troubles common to man's state ; and by hastening on from tried, to novel scenes of entertainment ; and by changing often, the objects of animal gratification—his viands and his books, his climate and his companions, and his countless instruments of pleasure—he had learned to be ever sipping, and yet never *cloyed* by tasting, of the cup of sensual joy. But the curtain has fallen ! The drama of his delight is closed. The eye, the ear, the palate, and all the organs on whose action *his pleasures* were suspended, are now locked up within that coffin, and his con-

nection with them is dissolved. He is cut off from all his chosen scenes of entertainment, and sources of enjoyment; and which of the streams has followed him to the tomb?

3. But suppose, in the third place, he had acquired great possessions: that he lived, not merely to eat and drink, and to gratify sensual desire; but that he rose with the sun, and did eat the bread of carefulness; and for the success of his daily toil, men blessed him; and, for the reward of his industrious life, he saw around him many fields which his labours had acquired, and groves his hands had planted, and an enlarged fold of flocks and herds, full barns, and houses loaded with the rich fruits of his toil. He had much enjoyment in looking back upon his beginning, in calculating his gains, in surveying the products of his ingenuity, of his successful schemes for accumulating treasures, and in contemplating his superior affluence, to that of men of equal strength of sagacity, and equal advantages in business. Envy saw him, and was grieved: *he* looked down and blessed the soul surrounded with abundance.

Behold him now! His soul required of him; and his body, worn out in the service of Mammon, lost to the enjoyment of all these possessions. He labored to be rich—succeeded—and died! Which now, of all his variety of possessions, does he call his own? Ask him of his lands—he gives you no answer. Offer him the choicest of his idols—death has taken them from him, and what has he left? Talk of his acquisitions—the glory of them can go no further after him, than to the monument over his grave; and there, his descendants are ashamed to write his real character. Can he now say, Soul take thine ease; thou hast much goods in store? Before that soul shall again animate the body, by whose joint influence those goods were acquired, they will have been burned up, and he will reclaim his golden gods in vain. Nothing, then, on which he has set his heart, has

gone with him to comfort him—nothing to feed his passions : for every thing which was corporeal is left below, and his spirit is confined to a state, in which no carnal passion can ever be gratified.

4. But, in the fourth place, you will tell me he had a vigorous mind ; and, that among all his gettings, he was not neglectful of intellectual acquisitions. I grant you the fact. I will admit that he was fitted, like Newton, to explore the worlds which revolve in yonder heavens ; that with Locke, he could survey that *darker* world, the human understanding ; that with the Statesman he could guide the wheels of government, and teach senators wisdom : and that with the Academician, he was qualified to train to future greatness the aspiring youthful mind, and even the master with the scholar. But mark you now, how empty is that skull ! adorned once, with all the learning of the sage, and richly stored with all the fruits which human science ever matured. But its knowledge was only of *this* world—a knowledge of the *head*, which, without religion, only puffeth up, and which like the world itself, to whose use it was confined, was destined of God to vanish away. His mental acquisitions were of that kind only, which do but engender pride, and minister to its condemnation. And what advantage, what comfort has he, over the idiot and the fool, so long as his intellectual attainments have not advanced him a step in the kingdom of God ; and so his eminence served only to render more commanding the prospect before him, and more terrible the height from which he is precipitated. Alas ! he has carried nothing of science away with him, which he can apply, in so different a state, for his consolation. His glory, indeed, is left behind on monumental marble, on the column of the Capitol, the canvass of the Senate-chamber, or the parchment of the Academic register ; but *there* it is doomed to perish, instead of following him, like the good

works of the Christian, to the tribunal of his judge, and successfully advocating there, his title, through faith, to the inheritance of the sons of God.

5. But, in the fifth place, he had a reputation and a fame which survive him ; and, as the power of reflection is not lost with the animal life, shall he not at least by a retrospective employment, beguile the darkness of his descending way ? Those cheering praises, which followed him through all the walks of life—which met him when he went out, and went after him when he returned to the privacies of domestic retirement—and the fame, which promised him a posthumous immortality—shall not they, by the exercise of man's prerogative, break through even the barrier of the grave, and open one avenue, through which pleasure shall find an entrance to his soul ? Forlorn and wretched expectation ! One pæan, even while *here*, must rise upon another ; and one voice follow another, and echo his praises, and prolong his fame, to supply the gratification of his ruling passion. How then, in a condition where the voice of man is no longer heard, and in which the trump of fame is changed into the vision and the transparencies of truth, shall such reflections cheer his heart ? There is no correspondence, between the reflections of the world of spirits, and the lying vanities of this illusive state. There is no connection, between departed spirits, and flesh and blood. Between us and them, there is a great gulph fixed, across which, no communications are borne : for so, the word of God would be belied, and work, device, and knowledge of things present, would survive an entrance to the grave. We leave, to the credulity of children, the apparitions of the dead ; and to them, who dream in the wakefulness of the fanatic, the fancy of conversing with departed spirits ; and binding our faith to the word of God, we affirm, that the dead know not any thing of the

living,\* and have no more a portion in any thing done under the sun. Even the reputation for piety, therefore, which, through sinful confidence in men, so nourished their hopes, and fortified their presumption and security, when living, withdraws its poor and withered consolations from the spirits of the dead; and in the realities of unshrouded consciousness, that reputation is obliterated: all is gone, but the lines which memory draws of the vanity of sinful expectations.

Thus lives the departed spirit—unable to avoid that presence of its abused God, which it too successfully attempted, while in the body, to shun. Stripped of all which ministered to its pleasure when united to it, and separated from all the instruments of its enjoyment; all its habits broken—its modes of thought, and of existence, changed—void of good when looking forward, and without one object of refreshing contemplation when it looks behind! So is every one when he dieth, who layeth up treasures only on the earth, and is not rich towards God.

But I have shown you hitherto, only the negative evils, which God has appointed to that soul; and these are but its *lesser* evils. For, although we can readily conceive one's wretchedness to be excessive, when only deprived of the *in-*

\* The Author has a right to his own opinion, though some have taught a different doctrine. The passages from Ecclesiastes will not support him; since the object of that book is not so much to teach direct truth, as to give us a *picture* of the confused speculations of a mind, distracted by doubt as to the chief happiness of man. On any other supposition, the book would teach flat infidelity. For example—Chap. iii. verse 19—“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other.” Consider this, as the soliloquy of a heart, seeking repose in unbelief, and it is easily explained; but if it is direct doctrine, it is very dark. Angels know, and are interested in, the affairs of this world; and is it clear that its events are unknown to the dead?

*struments* on which it has always depended for enjoyment ; yet such would be a state comparatively tolerable, might the soul be allowed to hope to form new associations, new habits, and obtain new sources of gratification for its passions. But for such a hope, there is not in all the book of God, a solitary support—

6. But, in the sixth place, the word of God assures us that all the *means* of gratification shall at death be taken away from the worldling. The new companions of his soul, shall be a source of more vexation, and greater terror, than the old. These companions, it is explicitly told us, are spirits of greater malignity, and power, than himself—spirits, before their defection from God, of greater eminence in knowledge, and in power ; and who, having lost nothing of *those* attributes, are capable of becoming more extensively mischievous to the apostates of our race. To the land of despair then, the wicked man cannot carry the means he now enjoys, either of present comfort, with creatures like himself ; nor the means at present in his possession, of avoiding *their* doom and of becoming happy. He lodges now, with the hopeless, and therefore, with the most malignant. His soul is beyond the region of invitation, of repentance, and pardon and praise. No messenger from earth, and (as Christ has shown us, in the Parable of the rich man and Lazarus,) none from heaven, descends with the good tidings. He hears it said no more, “ he that believeth shall be saved”—There is an end to faith when vision comes. No sabbath there opens the gates of the sanctuary, and points to a refuge from guilt. No ambassador of God, looking across the gulph, is suffered to cry in fervent prayer, God be merciful to that sinner. The door is shut, and the means of salvation and the end together, too long disregarded, are forever lost. His pious friends will no more wet his pillow with their tears ; the pity of angels no longer desire to look

into his condition; and the compassion of a dying and interceding Saviour, no longer defer the execution of the threatened evil, when, to him, the great day of his wrath is come.

If *such* be the condition—Immortal hearer! of the departed sinner: if he have indeed, carried nothing away which his heart held dear, nor even the means of becoming better, which he held *not* dear; then, what remains to his soul but remorse and wretchedness ineffable! It can remember its former pleasures, only to regret their loss; its former advantages, only to lament their abuse; and listen to the anthems above, only to know, with indescribable pain, that it has no portion in those songs of elevated joy; and feel the dereliction and the displeasure of God, without the possibility of diverting the thoughts from these objects of contemplation, by the enjoyments of an animal nature, and the gratification of animal passions.

If therefore, he suffer only from what he has actually *lost*, his sufferings must be extreme; for it is his *all*. But when to that, is added the positive punishment threatened to the unholy, his wretchedness becomes such as mortal eye hath not seen, nor ear heard—such as has scarcely entered into the heart of man, on this side the grave, to conceive.

Thus, heir of the wisdom which descendeth not from above! I have labored to place you, in your own view, in the condition to which every impenitent sinner is destined: and though the imagination, which has thus for a little time laid you in the grave, can also bring you back again; yet I entreat you to remember, that what *I* have *imagined*, except you repent, *you* will ere long *realize*. And should it be so—should you indeed carry nothing away with you, in which you now delight; and should nothing of the glory you have yet obtained, descend after you—I entreat you to enquire diligently, what, in the multitude of your thoughts

within you, (for thought you will still retain) what comforts, will delight your soul! And O! what alleviation of their sorrows, in such case, will you leave for your surviving friends? And though, from prudential motives, no man should repeat to *them*, at your death, this train of evangelical reflections, they will nevertheless be just. Though now, you may think them incorrect, they will remain none the less true. The believer in Jesus, looks *beyond* the grave. He, *faintly* indeed, but *truly*, apprehends, the state of those who die impenitent, to be what from the inspired record I have imperfectly, but faithfully described; and your bereaved friends, though they will not, *cannot express* these truths, will still almost unavoidably find them revived in their minds: and you *yourself*, more miserable still, with agonizing power will *feel* them *all*.

If then, there be any thing novel in the elucidation, to render the truth impressive—any thing forcible in the method of its application—for your *friends'* sake, for your *own* sake, shrink not from the appeal now made to your understanding, your sympathy, your sensibility; but yield to the conviction that you *must* repent or perish—that the world, and all it can impart, cannot be gain to you, in exchange for your soul; and choose a part, and pursue a portion, which you *can* carry away; and seek a glory, an honor, a fame, which *will* descend after you, and never leave from following you, till it have fulfilled the every promise of Jehovah to the just.

We see now, what cause the Christian indeed, has, to be contented with his lot. With a holy temper, he possesses not merely the *one*, but the *every thing*, which is needful. And is it possible such an one should repine? If you are a Christian, you have the spirit of Jesus Christ; and with this, you are happy, whether in poverty or in affluence—whether loved or hated, and whether you remain in the

body or depart. God is *your* portion, and *heaven* your inheritance. *You* indeed, no less than the wicked, hasten to the grave; but with what different emotions, and to how different a destiny! *They* carry *nothing* with them, of all they loved—*you* leave nothing of this character behind, but what shall soon follow you. When *they* die, survivors weep only for *them*, like Christ at the gate of devoted Jerusalem. *Their* tears, when *you* die, fall not for you, but for themselves. *Theirs*, on the death bed, if not obdurate as the nether millstone, are emotions of unutterable horror—*Yours* in a similar condition, of joy unspeakable, and full of glory. The wicked go to a region like their souls—a region of thick darkness; but the humble believer, to a region of light and joy unspeakable. At the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, the wicked will resume the connection with their bodies, only to endure the visible marks of shame and everlasting contempt—the righteous, at the same moment, to appear in the likeness of Christ's glorious body, and to perfect the holiness and happiness, his grace has pledged, to all his faithful followers. Consider what has been said: and say, in the undissembled language of the heart, whether it be better, to take the character, the glory, and the destiny of the worldling; or to live and die a christian!

## SERMON VII.



CHRISTIAN DILIGENCE.

HEBREWS vi. 11, 12.

*And we desire—that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

**I** KNOW of no one virtue more frequently inculcated, or to which promises of greater interest are made in the Gospel, than that of CHRISTIAN DILIGENCE. It is to this, the Apostle ascribes the attainment of fortitude, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness and charity. It is only by *eminence* in it, that we arrive at the full assurance of hope, and make our calling and our election sure. The Apostle Peter, in sight of the heavens on fire, and the dissolving earth, and a God descending to judgment, sums up the whole duty of man, in this pressing exhortation—“Wherefore beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be *diligent*; that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.” Emulous of so vast a good as is comprehended in this description, man, aspiring and immortal, but mistaking its nature and place, has sought it in every object below the skies; traversed uninhabited continents, explored every field

of science, and fathomed every ocean. But with the depth, each in turn has said, "it is not in me." It cannot, therefore, but be worthy of our enterprize, to make ourselves acquainted with the virtuous course, at the end of which, God assures us it will be found; and also, with some considerations calculated to enforce the duty of leaving every other course, to follow the bright career of those, who, by this means, are now actually inheriting the promises.

I. Let us first make ourselves acquainted with that virtue, to which so much is promised.

Christian diligence has for its *end*, the glory and enjoyment of God, in opposition to every other species of aggrandizement: it has the character of *decision*, in opposition to procrastination: of *activity*, in opposition to listlessness and sloth: of *vigilance*, in opposition to incaution: and of *perseverance* and *constancy*, in opposition to discouragement.

1. Christian diligence, in the first place, has the glory and enjoyment of God for its *end*, in opposition to every other species of aggrandizement.

To be diligent, without regard to the end, is, confessedly, no virtue; and for an *unworthy* end, as obviously a crime. But, on christian principles, *his* end only is entitled to the character of virtuous, who, not slothful in business, is fervent in spirit, serving the LORD. The perfections of God, his works, and his relation to us, give him an *exclusive* and *perfect* claim, to our first and best affections. His glory was the end of all his works, and especially of the creation of man, whom he made eminently for himself, and for the express purpose of declaring his glory. He, of consequence, who will not voluntarily co-operate with him to the same end, is, by the very law of his being, destitute of moral worth, and incapable of the enjoyment, which only the love of the Deity can beget or confer. Without this, therefore, for his primary end, all his labors terminate on objects

whose pursuit is criminal ; and in whose nature is contained a source of enjoyment, neither permanent nor pure. And when God, at the close of his labours, shall make inquisition, (as he will do of every man) his mouth will be stopped, by the inquiry into their design—"have ye done it at all unto ME?" Or, if he have the daring to put in a plea for the reward of his unchristian labours, another inquiry will confound all his expectations—who required these at your hands ?

2. Christian diligence has the character of *decision*, in opposition to procrastination. When it is convenient—considered as a reply to the command of God—is the answer of a rebellious heart. Nothing is required of us *to-morrow*. We are creatures of a day ; therefore it is said, "*to-day*, if ye will *hear* his voice, harden not your hearts." *To-morrow*, should it come, will bring with it its own full share of duties ; and if those of *to-day* be postponed to it, they will be omitted by a necessity of our own making. The very *will* to delay, therefore, is destructive of the nature of virtue : for no man performs his duty, but he who prevents the possibility of his *never* doing it : and who does not know, that his times are in God's hands. To fix on a future period, for the exercise of faith in the Redeemer, benevolence to rational beings, penitence for sin, and gratitude and hope towards God, is actually to deny our *obligations* : it is virtually to reject the reign of God, and the whole system of Christianity ; and he who does this, is lost. Such an one debases his rational nature below mere instinct : for the stork in the heavens, knoweth her appointed time ; and the turtle, the crane, and the swallow observe it. Delay of any duty, to God or man, a moment beyond the season in which it is required of God, is incompatible with Christian diligence : else, the wisdom of God had not concealed from us the term of our life, and the bound of our habitation. To-

day, you have wealth to employ, as the steward of God : to-morrow, its wings shall be fledged, and it will fly away, as an eagle, towards the heavens. To-day, you have an altar, on which to offer spiritual sacrifices by Jesus Christ : to-morrow, it shall be digged down. To-day, you have all the attributes of a man : to-morrow, reason shall be taken to its native skies. Decision, then, in opposition to procrastination, is an essential characteristic of Christian diligence.

3. It has also, in the third place, the character of *activity*, in opposition to *sloth*. God has made us for action ; and therefore, with a consistency worthy of him, promised nothing to sloth. " Do it with thy might," is the command of the lawgiver : *abounding* in the work of the Lord, the description of the obedient. Outer darkness, and gnashing of teeth, is the portion of the wicked and slothful servant. The joint activity of mind, heart, and members of the body, is essential to the performance of every duty, in every relation. Without it, we can never have the knowledge necessary to sanctify our zeal, nor the zeal which is necessary to goodness. The bed of effeminacy is a soil, in which no virtues flourish. Of the Christian life, a race, and a warfare, are the images ; and who would think of taking his ease in a race, or talk of moderation in a battle ! Irresolution was never known to gain the one, nor sluggishness to win the other. These are qualities, ever accompanied with emptiness of virtue, and followed with poverty of possession.

4. Christian diligence, in the fourth place, has the character of *vigilance*, in opposition to slumber and incaution. It is no inconsiderable part of pure and undefiled religion, to keep unspotted from the world : and to be found of God in peace, without spot and blameless, is the very object of the virtue we describe. A careless traveller, in a strange land of many paths, must be expected to lose his way. The ship will hardly fail to be stranded, which approaches the

coast in a tempest, with every mariner below. The heedless on slippery places, must fall: and the centinel, who sleeps when the camp is surprised, must die.

Who then, has the temerity to hope to keep himself, without watchfulness, in the midst of artful enemies without, and insidious and ensnaring foes within? In the midst of a world, where all is alluring and false—all fiction, and disguise. Let him who is so weak, so credulous, and incautious, remember that what the Lord said unto his disciples, he said unto all—"Watch."

5. Finally, Christian diligence has the character of *perseverance* and *constancy*, in opposition to discouragement. Though the songs of syrens echo from behind, and the flesh pots of Egypt send after him their odours; though before him, is the painfulness of incessant labour, the fatigue of watchful and wearisome nights, and the crosses of an opposing flesh, and the scoffs of a profane and calumniating world; and "though rocks and dangers fill the way"—it remains the judgment of God, that he who looketh back, or lingers in his step, is unfit for the kingdom of heaven. And though hope keep forward, and often disappears as he mounts after her to one eminence over another; and though, with all his exertion, he is still behind—yet, on the very banner under which he first enlisted, he still reads the inscription—**THROUGH MUCH TRIBULATION WE MUST ENTER THE KINGDOM: VALOR BEFORE CONFLICT, CONFLICT BEFORE VICTORY, AND VICTORY BEFORE THE SPOIL.** And under all this, it is written, **IF ANY MAN DRAW BACK, MY SOUL SHALL HAVE NO PLEASURE IN HIM.**

All who hear, have been made acquainted with their duty and with the desire of every benevolent heart; and now, that you may be induced to perform that duty, and to fulfil that holy desire—

II. Look to the departed pious friends of man; and re-

remember that though they have done with earth, we have not done with them, when we have laid them in the tomb. The eye, indeed, no longer dwells upon their persons, the ear no more listens to their counsels : but faith follows their immortal spirits, and communes with them in glory. Retrace the paths they trod, and derive some salutary lesson from the end to which they led. Their histories are recorded in our memories, and our bibles, that by their example we may be urged to duty. None of them lived, none died, to himself. And now God commands us, and *they* intreat us, to follow them, through faith and patience, to the same exalted state. *They* inherit the promises : to follow them, is to gain the same inheritance. They stand before the throne of God ; they dwell in the city of the GREAT KING : travelling the same way, with equal alacrity, will bring us to the same temple, and the same God. They have escaped all dangers, and overcome all enemies : under the same Captain, girded with the same armor, and contending with like earnestness, we also shall escape, and triumph. Let their virtues then, excite our emulation, their success, encourage our efforts.

Are you a christian ? much remains to be done, to make you complete in all the will of God. Are you a sinner—unpardoned and unsanctified—*every* thing is to be done to fit you for their society. The duty we are enforcing is momentous. Our years are departing, our day declines, our life will soon be gone. The saints call on us from heaven ; the prisoners of despair from the abyss ; the whole congregation of the dead from their graves ; and wisdom from the oracles of God, to do our duty now. The Redeemer, in striking coincidence of thought and language, repeats the monition—“ I must work, while it is day : the night cometh, in which no man can work.”

But to some of us only a fragment of life remains ; and

what fervor of prayer, what strength of resolution, what frugality of every means of grace, is necessary to discipline and mature the mind, and fit the spirit for a place, where nothing enters that defileth ! Have we a christian profession to adorn—a world to bless—a heaven to gain—a God to glorify—and can we sink upon the lap of earthly pleasure, and slumber in inglorious ease, and while away our life in frivolous pursuits ? Have we to change the whole current of our way—to eradicate prejudices, growing from our youth—to subdue our inclinations—to dam, or drain, a flood of iniquity—to surmount a thousand temptations, and overcome the world—and is all this compatible with *ordinary* industry and zeal ? The spirits in yonder heavens, thought not so. They were ardent, and vigorous in application to the one thing. Grand designs were never *formed*, much less accomplished, by any other means. Nor of all designs formed, by *man*, does any surpass in greatness, that of a sinner to obtain the approbation of God, and the society of the blessed in heaven. Feeble efforts *must* leave these objects unattained. Agonize to enter, is a direction, in neglect of which a man perishes at the gate. Not an exception is found in heaven. We have the same natures that they possessed, who have gone before us, and now inherit the promises ; and living in the same world, must exercise the same self-denial and engagedness. Could they gain access to God only through the mediator—neither can we. Were the graces of the Holy Spirit, given only to their fervent and upright prayers—and shall we obtain them in answer to supplications of any other character ? Did they work out their salvation with fear and trembling—and shall that infinite good be bestowed on you, without solicitude, and energetic co-operation with him who wrought in them ? Did not faith without works save *them*—and shall a barren subscription to creeds and covenants, be accounted right-

eousness to you? Did *they* reap life everlasting only by sowing to the *spirit*—and shall you reap the same harvest by sowing to the *flesh*? Was actual perseverance in the love of God, while looking only to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, indispensable for them—and will a speculative contest for this practice, be enough for you? If, in the prosecution of their Master's work, no examples diverted them, nor custom deterred them—shall the inconveniences to which fidelity exposes you, cause you to shrink from the duties of your station?

But here is a man, who would be a christian, while afraid of overstepping the customs of the world. A candidate for heaven, and anxious what *men* will say of him; and how much his religion will cost him; and hoping to inherit the promises, while unwilling to expose himself to ridicule or inconvenience! And was it thus, that Paul and his associates, acquired confidence in prospect of the judgment seat of Christ? Was it thus, that constellation of worthies, who, while reflecting the glory of God from the record of their history, brighten also the heavens with their lustre—was it thus, they obtained their fixture in that world of light? Did they not rather, at the command of God, leave country and kindred, dwell in tabernacles, and sojourn in a strange land, and offer up their children and their own lives? And did they not defy the wrath of kings, and esteem the *reproach* of Christ more highly than all the *honors* man could give; and harbour the friends of God at the hazard of life; and take patiently the lash, and joyfully the spoiling of their goods; and submit to imprisonment; and brave the billows of the deep, and the jaws of beasts, and the fangs of reptiles, and the tortures of racks, not accepting deliverance? Did their faith fail them, for threats, and cruel mockings, and cold, and hunger, and nakedness, and burning, and stoning, and sawing asunder, and every form of

bitter death? Did they resist, unto blood, the false maxims, and unrighteousness, and ungodliness of men; to obtain a good report, and to fulfil the duties of godliness and charity—and do any of *us*, expect to steal into heaven, with a spirit which has nothing of the power to follow them?

But *you* have enemies, and difficulties, and temptations, besetting you on your *weak* side—so had they. You have dangers and trials peculiar to yourselves—so had they. But they overcame, and triumphed gloriously, by looking unto Jesus: and so must you. If like them you would live and reign with Christ, like them, you must be willing to *suffer* with him. You have the same means, and motives, and encouragements, which they had. The same atonement, on which to rest your justification, the same TEACHER to guide you, and the same COMFORTER to uphold you with his promises, and purify you with the hopes he inspires: the same tremendous denunciations, to make you stand in awe and not sin: the same exhibitions of divine goodness, to allure and animate you: the same fearful kind of providences to admonish, and chasten, and correct you: the same delicious foretastes to constrain you; and the same ground for fortitude, and constancy, and expectation of help in time of need. What lack *you* then, that *they* enjoyed? You have the same freedom of thought and action, and are furnished with equally powerful reasons, and plain directions, for a life of devotedness to the cause and kingdom of Jesus Christ. The covenant of grace is unaltered: the terms of life unchanged: nor is the path to glory narrower, than when they marched through it without fainting.

What is our apology for being *less busy* than they? The moral atmosphere in which they lived, was even more chilling than ours. They met opposition from without more incessant, and violent; and they tell us of *fightings within*, which brought forth exclamations such as indicated a bleed-

ing heart. Are you reproached with enthusiasm for your zeal? They were charged with madness from the fumes of new wine. Must you be charged with bigotry or fanaticism, if you yield not the faith once delivered to the saints? They were said to be mad, and setters forth of strange gods. Is it, in the opinion of some, ignorance and illiberality in you, to adhere strictly to the precepts of Christ? In them, such adherence was worse; and to serve God with *all* the heart, and *all* the strength, is no more preciseness, and being righteous over-much, in you, than it was obstinacy in them, and disrespect to Cæsar. Yet their fidelity was maintained, in the face of civil authority, and at the expense of martyrdom. Yours may be equally well maintained, and not a single statute, nor a dog of state, lift up his tongue against you. The charter of their privileges has not come down to us abridged; and yet, the number of our facilities for improvement under it, are enlarged; and we have, added to their excitements, the light and force of *their* example. However great the glory offered them—however ennobling the pursuits enjoined upon them—however many and strong the hopes and fears which agitated them—however feelingly enforced their obligations to Christ—the glory to which *we* are invited is the same; save that of triumphing at the stake, in the cauldron, or on the cross: the pursuits enjoined on us are equally honorable; save, perhaps, the liberty of suffering their perils among the heathen, by robbers, among false brethren, in a wilderness or on the sea, to spread abroad the name and religion of the Saviour: the hopes and fears, too, which agitate *us*, may be made equally fruitful and valuable in their influence; and the extent of our obligations, in all respects, is as clearly and variously taught.

Who then, will fail to follow men of such courage, when he beholds them passed safely through? Who can give way

to despondency or sloth, when such a spirit is, of itself, enough to prevent his entrance into *their* inheritance? They reaped not by faintness in seed time, nor obtained rest by avoiding exertion. They became models of Christian diligence—and now, where are they? Alive in the presence of God forevermore: from the state, the possibility, the apprehension of death, they are already freed: they are no more connected with a body subject to disaster and decay. They rest in a city, none of whose inhabitants say, I am sick: in a city, where sin pollutes, and can disturb their peace no more: where malice and envy can no more blast the good man's name. No enemy from without disturbs, none within interrupts their tranquillity. The veil is withdrawn which hid from them the loving God, and pure in heart, they see his face and live. Be followers of them in Christian diligence, and soon the pangs of doubt, and of distrust, shall cease to exclude *you* from their perfect joys. Enduring patiently, and bearing cheerfully, and forgiving freely, and laboring zealously, a little longer, *you* will be summoned to the same banquet of unmingled peace. Once, like you, those happy spirits dwelt in dust—in a world of vanity and vicissitude; among brethren of different views; with a church of mingled wheat and tares. *Their* eye was single: their work was performed with Christian assiduity; and where are they? At rest in heaven; feasting on joys unspeakable and full of glory. They mourn no more over the discordances and failures of the visible family of God. They have labored to reconcile men to each other, and to God; and above all to keep *themselves* pure, partaking not in other men's sins, and their works have followed them. They move in perfect concert, and each, with all his modified, exalted powers, employs those powers in praise, and in enjoyment. Would *you* be there? Let your work, like theirs, be *done*; and as *you* approach the evening horizon, let your

orb, though possibly less *dazzling*, be *fullest* and *fairest* to every beholder's eye. Read their histories, behold the effects of their efforts, and recollect that you are indebted, under God, for the knowledge you possess of the way of life, to *their* exertions. Through your fidelity to Christ, to your children, to the church, and to mankind, let any who are to succeed you, owe the same blessed privilege to you. From every obstacle you meet in following their steps, look upward on them, and through them, to Christ, and surmount them all.

Are you a Christian? Remember heaven is your home; and keep your affections set on things above. There are your *best* friends—the Angels who minister to you; your pious relatives, who, living and dying, blessed you; your Saviour who intercedes for you; your Father and your God: and there be your conversation, and there your hopes and treasures. Then, as often as duty calls you down from the mount, you will return cheered and brightened, like the face of Moses when he had talked with God; or like Stephen's, which, while looking stedfastly to the heavens, was seen, as it had been the face of an Angel.

*Aged* Brethren! may I be allowed to hope, that the duty of Christian diligence, has not been exhibited, and enforced in your hearing, in vain! For *you*, the living will labor but a little longer. A new world will soon surround you. You will not be suffered to abide at *this* altar, by reason of death. Here, beyond that period, no prayers can be offered *for* you, no service performed *by* you; and, as of another year,\* so of your connection with this world, it will be said—it is gone by forever. Will you not *all*, be followers of them who inherit the promises; that when the grave which waits for you shall be opened, and the dust return to dust again, *you* may

\* This discourse was delivered on the last Sabbath of the year 1820.

be added to the models we have been contemplating, and numbered, in our hope, among the spirits of the just? If you know not the alternative, I would not spread a mantle over its horrors.

Why then, by a needless silence, should I deceive those, who do not rank *themselves* among the Fathers? Truth calls *them aged*, who are no nearer heaven for having passed the meridian of life; and who are diligent, only in the concerns of the present state, and live without hope, and without God in the world. *They* make haste to the land of silence, nay they are already dead, who suffer the cares of this life to choke the word, and render all the admonitions of their God unfruitful. Their murdered hours will soon be avenged, when, stretched on the bed of death, they find no place for Christian diligence. There you may see the worldling, who has not *one* to give, offering ten thousand worlds, for a respite long enough to exemplify such diligence, and to secure its rewards. But *had* you all these worlds, my brother, they would not redeem one hour from death, nor yield to God a ransom for those you now misspend. Will you not now avail yourself of this admonition and become a follower of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises? Nor let a consciousness of *past* neglect discourage, but stimulate the mind, as the work has diminished nothing in its vastness or importance; and the time of service is of shorter duration.

Nor, in the application of this subject, should the young be neglected: for in the morning of life, no less than in palsied age, we are obliged, by him who gives law to all, to make a proper use of time. Yet all the pages of life, which record no *proofs*, or *fruits*, of christian diligence, are either blank or blot. Art *thou* secure, young man! while not a follower of them, by whose lives this duty has been enforced? Hast *thou* another, and a *better* standard? They who have

long passed *your* period of life, in inaction and spiritual sloth, can tell you, what embittered recollections this fact has brought on them. They can tell you, that there is but one spring, and that this, if squandered, is usually followed with self-reproach, instead of the joys of the diligent in harvest. Could I find a consideration, more worthy than has been already set before you, to enforce on you this duty, I should owe it to your age; because, commenced at this period, and prosecuted to old age, christian diligence promises both the greater honor to God, the greater good to *man-kind*, and to *yourself*, the greatest reward. For, consider that diligence will accomplish no less in Christ's kingdom, than in any other: and yet, in *every* other, what has it *not* done? How many deserts has it turned into fruitful fields; and wildernesses, into flourishing cities, and seats of civilization and science! It has brought to light those physical truths, which nature hid among her secrets, to teach the world how worthless genius is, without industry. It has raised the understanding to the apprehension of those sublime moral truths, and relations of truth, which indolence would have left to rank forever among the impenetrable and unintelligible mysteries of fate. Its powers have the acknowledgement of high distinction, in the reduction of all sciences, to form, order and system: in the developement of schemes of the highest *temporal* utility, and sources of prosperity, to the nations which are to be born. It has enlightened the path of worlds, at an immense distance from our own; and formed the ascending steps, of the benighted mind, to all the natural perfections of the Deity. It has united distant continents better than armies, it has subdued kingdoms, and civilized many portions of the world. What, then, may it *not* do, under the guidance of christian motives, and governed by the christian's temper? What an influence may it not exert on the moral world, in its reduction to or-

der, to virtue, and to God? Co-operating with him, what excellence, what command, what glory is not within the comprehension of its hand? It has already, thus employed, beat down the bulwarks of idolatry and superstition, and of every practised sin, in many countries. It is destined ultimately, to fill the earth with the knowledge of God, and add to intellectual, and every other imaginable greatness, the wisdom and felicity of the heavens.

While the children of this world labor so industriously, to obtain only what shall perish, will it not be your glory, to pursue with equal ardor and constancy, the crown which fadeth not away? Influenced by a consideration, which unites the dearest interests of two worlds, shall it not be yours, to take hold on the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come; and thus to verify the sayings of that book, whence we derive all our lessons of wisdom; and see, if, in obeying and serving God, man may not spend his days in prosperity, and his years in pleasure; and if he do not find a consummation of all human greatness and glory, the moment he steps across the dividing line. Here, the munificence of God, having secured to christian diligence, by constitution and promise, all to which wisdom and grace could prompt an Almighty Father's heart, must have an end. And if all this shall fail to move you; you are lost. O! who can comprehend the full meaning of that expression—LOST? Who by searching can find it out unto perfection? It is deep as hell—its measure is eternity. Here stopped the wisdom of Solomon: the wisdom of a greater than Solomon, affected not to go beyond; and who must not despair, when baffled at the point, where Christ's arguments and compassions together end!

## SERMON VIII.



\* MODESTY OF APPAREL.

I TIMOTHY, ii. 8, 9.

*I will—that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shame-facedness and sobriety.*

**T**HESE are the words of an Apostle of Jesus Christ, directed to an evangelist residing at Ephesus—at that time a principal city of Asia. Although this exhortation might have been penned for the benefit, ultimately, of future ages ; it had, doubtless, a particular reference, and was designed to be applied, to the existing state of that polite city. A degree of effeminacy, has ever characterized the people of that nation. The power of custom, endangered the purity of the professors of godliness : and in the early age of the church, it was of peculiar importance that its members should be distinguished from its enemies, as well by propriety of exter-

\* Perhaps it is due to the sex to say, that the part of this discourse which relates to immodest apparel, is not so applicable to the present mode, as to that which prevailed when it was written. But when we consider the tyranny of fashion, and the peculiar reluctance of the female world to *hear* on this subject, it becomes doubly important, that such admonition should be *read*. The closet may convey the censure, and spare the blush.

nal appearances as by the superiority of their principles. So particular and so extensive are the rules of christianity, that they extend, as we are here taught, and as we are often reminded, to the manners, the deportment, and even the *dress* of its professors. And from the sex spoken of in the text, we may conclude that the same exhortations are applicable to them, in this, as well as in past ages. Indeed, it is supposed, that the fashionable moderns have as much excelled their ancestors, in frivolity and indelicacy, as in their advantages for surpassing them in sobriety and modesty.

With respect to the particular subject under consideration, we have, indeed, never witnessed a period, so distinguished for vanity and immodesty as the present. That sex, to whom we have been accustomed to look for every thing that is refined in sentiment and manners, by the introduction of practices which the Apostle, and even nature, forbids, have carried us back to the age in which he lived. The softening and purifying tendency of christianity, seems now no longer observable; and we are called upon, as were Christ and his Apostles, to make such animadversions on fashionable vices, as seem scarcely becoming the sanctity of the house of God. I have chosen this season, (evening) for such a purpose, out of tenderness to the conscious delicacy of those, who blush for them who discover their want of modesty, even in this sacred place.

Attend then with seriousness to the solemn demand of the Apostle: "I will—that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shame-facedness and sobriety."

I. I shall consider, in the first place, the nature and extent of this injunction, as it relates to apparel: and this we shall find to embrace the ideas, both of *modesty* and *ornament*.

1. With respect to the first, it may be difficult to settle with precision the meaning of the phrase. *Modest apparel*

is a vague phrase, when unconnected with the rules of christianity—ever varying, in its import, with public opinion, which is gradually formed by the customs of the world. What in one age, has been deemed indelicate and immodest; has, in another, been considered decorous and becoming. And that dress, which, at one time, in the same nation, has been thought studied singularity, and an affectation of modesty; has, at another, been accounted barely decent. Still, as has been well observed, “in this instance, as in all others where the passions are concerned, the strictest casuist, will generally be found the safest.” The public regulations with respect to dress, in the early stages of society in this country, and their effects, clearly evince the absolute impossibility of making sufficient legal provisions for maintaining propriety. The regulations referred to, were marked with a severity bordering on the ludicrous—with restrictions undoubtedly too great: but the almost unrestrained indulgence, which has since prevailed, has clearly passed the true mean.

The modesty of apparel, therefore, which the Apostle enjoins, must be determined by the nature of christian morality. Whatever is inconsistent with purity of heart—whatever tends, on the first experiment, to excite a blush in her who puts on the habit, or in those who first behold her in such a garb, must be considered as an infraction of the law of chastity. If we admit the justness of Christ’s morality, we cannot surely doubt, whether the latitude on this subject, at present given—not by public opinion, but by the mistresses of the fashionable world—be consistent with the laws of christianity. Judging from the reigning mode, one would suppose that instead of a fallen, guilty state, women imagined that they, and the rest of the world, were in that of paradisiacal innocence. But surely if their own feelings

are insufficient for this purpose, a consideration of the condition of our race should remind them of their error.

She who has any thing of the spirit of religion, needs not political statutes to confine her ; but will be always vigilant, to recede from the *borders* of immodesty, rather than in danger of overstepping them. Let those who have not the spirit of this religion, look, for the rules which should regulate their conduct, to the examples of those who have ; for the latter, it is to be presumed, are not involved in the general disgrace. In such examples, it is hoped they will find specimens of that modesty of apparel, of which the Apostle speaks, as opposed to indecency : although it must be acknowledged, painful as it is, that as it respects modesty when opposed to *ornament*, they will find it safer to apply to the evangelical Prophet than to them.

To frame rules, for the direction of women on such an article, was not the province of the Apostle, but of mothers in Zion. Paul therefore, has contented himself with a demand of modesty, in this particular, and left it to the piety and common sense of mothers, to do the rest. We will, therefore, only consider the consequences of a general neglect of the injunction in the text.

One of the most deplorable of these is, that the barriers of virtue are broken down. Society becomes dissolute—virtue loses its charms—and the fairest portion of creation, degenerate into mere animal existences. Immodesty of apparel, leads directly to indelicacy of sentiment ; and a corruption of sentiment, to incontinence of life. These, believe me, are not the figments of a disordered brain, but they are awful truths ; and though they are plain truths, you cannot but acknowledge that a faithful admonition, at the expense of your pride, is better than the most ingenious adulation or deception, at the expense of your virtue. If such admonition be given with candour, and accompanied with tender-

ness, it is the best proof of friendship. Indulge not the idea, then, too commonly embraced, that the Apostle Paul was an enemy to your sex. The superficial reader has ever considered him such : but understand him thoroughly, and you will be convinced he is their sincere friend ; and that he has ever consulted, in his directions to them, the interest, the dignity, and the happiness of the sex.

She who, by immodest apparel, exposes herself to the view of the world, cannot be said to reverence herself ; and she who does not reverence herself, must not claim even civility, and much less can she expect to receive respect, from others. Those who do thus expose themselves, greatly mistake the means which should be employed to attain their object. An outside, can never captivate the sensible and discerning part of the world ; and a custom which borders on indelicacy, will never fail to excite disgust, in those who have any principle of virtue within. Such a display, therefore, defeats their own designs.

But consider next, another consequence of this fashionable vice, which affects you in another point of view. Consider, that, in our own age, thousands have anticipated death, and gone down to the grave, their own executioners, and the monuments of their indiscretion and their sin. How often, within the sphere of our own observation, has disease and death been suffered to enter the frail and tender bodies of your sex, through too thin a habit ; and the consequences are awful, because they are eternal.

Finally—consider, that although the indelicacy of those who are known to be wanton, produces quite an opposite effect to that of the more refined, yet that under certain circumstances, and in certain cases, even the mind of the christian cannot fail of receiving, for a moment, such impressions as are accounted sinful, and as are chargeable on you. And are you so spotless, as to take it upon you to account for the

sin of others? Besides, while disobeying the injunction in the text, you are employing, not indeed the words of the wife of Potiphar to Joseph, but a language of the same import. By such indelicacy, you seize the young and the unwary by the mantle, and lead them to devices and to intrigues, which take hold on hell. You expose yourselves and others to snares, of which, if innocent, you little dream; and which, if guilty, will cost you the loss of character here, and the eternal loss of happiness hereafter.

II. We are to consider, secondly, that modesty of apparel which is opposed to ornament.

As a class of society, there is none who have bestowed so much attention on the decoration of the body, as the female sex. The Prophet, in the illustration of a certain truth, has recognized the justice of the sentiment, that in all civilized nations, women have been fond, to excess, of external embellishments—"Can a maid," says he, "forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?" Whether this fondness for ornament is to be accounted for by the natural constitution of their minds, or is the result of the partiality of the other sex to such as arrayed themselves in the most splendid attire, is not made a question by the inspired writers, neither is it of importance for us to decide. Certain it is, that in every civilized, and in some barbarous nations, it has been found to be a fact. But, with respect to this subject, we may rejoice in the truth, that a simplicity has prevailed in our age, unknown to the inhabitants of that period in which the Prophet wrote. Still, it is to be confessed, there remains room for improvement. Though the ornaments of the present age are neither so profuse, nor ridiculous, as those of a former, *they* are still chargeable with immodesty, or vanity, in their apparel, who suffer themselves to be directed in their choice of them, by the fancies of those who give law to the female world. The manner and minuteness, with which the

inspired penman has treated this subject, while it evinces its great importance, leaves no ground of excuse for those, who waste their valuable years, and estates, upon the decorations of the body. Some degree of thought, as well as care, in this particular, is not only allowable, but necessary. Still it is, and will ever remain, beneath the dignity of the female character—beneath the employment of an immortal mind—to be solicitous, wherewith the body shall be clothed. An anxiety on this subject, if discovered, lessens instantly, in the estimation of the world, the value of the woman. To her, therefore, whose object it is (and it certainly should be the object of all) to honor God, by becoming useful to mankind; and, by the purity of her example, to exert an extensive influence around her, *dress* will ever be a subordinate subject. The care of it, and the thoughts relating to it, will ever be incidental rather than studied. The care of the woman who reverences herself, will be to command esteem, rather by the richness of the furniture *within*, than the gay and gaudy profusion of that without.

But the attention and admiration of men, constitutes, with a virtuous woman, but a secondary consideration. She feels that she is immortal, and acts for eternity. She listens to the warning voice of God, not to the lying applauses of men. She knows that spiritual improvement, as well as domestic usefulness and peace, are hardly compatible with great attainments in the art of dress. She has the magnanimity to declare her feelings by her conduct; and to show others that she feels, that to improve, refine, and bless, not to dazzle and deceive, is the end of female existence. She gives the lie to the practical declaration of the silly, the vain, and the fluttering of her sex, that woman has only an animal nature; and evinces that she is endowed with exalted powers.

The frequent examination of the *person*, adds new preven-

tives to the examination of the *heart* : and the mind is generally found empty, where the person is profusely ornamented. But they greatly mistake the character of those of our sex who are worthy their regard, who imagine their garrison, though weak, to be in little danger, where the outworks are complete. No external trappings, whether natural or acquired, can ever atone for an uncultivated mind, or a base heart. And that mind will assuredly be ignorant, and that heart unacquainted with true virtue, which studies more to adorn the person with elegance, than to embellish and improve the soul with the ornaments of religious knowledge and the christian graces. Toilet devotion, and religious affections, cannot exist together. Both the kind, and degree of employment, necessary to the acquisition of the friendship and admiration of the world, are insuperable barriers to the obtaining of the approbation and favor of God. The embellishments of the person, without religion, may ensure the one ; only those of the soul formed by virtue, can secure those of the other. She who had never a thought of God, or of eternity, may gain *her* object by the former ; but she who has not devoted much thought to both, can never obtain the latter. The very taste for gaiety and show, implies either ignorance of, or indifference to, the precepts of the Gospel ; and the ambition and attempt to please, by such unhallowed and insignificant means, discovers an emptiness of soul, in her who seeks to captivate, and in those who are thus easily caught, pardonable only in children.

The subject admits of the keenest irony, and of every other species of wit ; but it is of too great importance to be treated even ludicrously. A subject, which, in the present view of it, is intimately connected with eternity, is not to be sported with, and thus placed on a level with those which the Deity is supposed not to regard. A course of conduct which is tending, in its consequences, to the destruction of a

rational, intelligent, and immortal soul, requires the caution produced by a view of the sanctions of God's law, rather than the lash of ridicule. Those whose practices are inconsistent with the laws of christianity, require the interposition of the grace of God, to change their dispositions; and the means used to effect this must be holy. Satire may irritate the passions, but does not, ordinarily, operate as a means of changing the temper. If it is imagined, that this is giving an undue importance to the subject, turn to the expressions of God himself, and you will discover in what light he views the character, the disposition, and the conduct of those, of whom we have been treating. "Moreover, the Lord saith, because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks, and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet; therefore, the Lord will smite the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and expose them. The Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments, their cauls, and their round tires, like the moon; the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers; the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the head-bands, and the tablets, and the ear rings; the rings and nose jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils: and it shall come to pass, that instead of a girdle, there shall be a rent; and instead of well set hair, baldness; and instead of a stomacher, a girding of sackcloth; and burning, instead of beauty: and the gates of Zion shall lament and mourn; and she, being desolate, shall sit upon the ground." Such are the judgments, consequent upon what are commonly esteemed venial indiscretions.

How the social virtues can be maintained in exercise, in consistency with such attention to dress, as the laws of custom impose, they perhaps can best determine who waste their

time in devising the form, and executing their devices, of their apparel and its appendages—who exhaust their treasures, in providing ornaments and chains of gold—who turn the stream of beneficence upon themselves—who leave frugality to the vulgar, and are profuse, only in those charities, which begin and end at home. Pride, vanity, and self-conceit, are almost invariably found attached to those frivolous characters, who are emulous to excel in the richness or gaiety of their apparel: and should they not be found so conspicuous in these, they lay a foundation for envy, malignity, and censoriousness, in every rival. Even the appearance of humility, in such, excites suspicions of its reality. The attention which they usually command from the weak and the frivolous, is apt to betray them into an imagination of some real excellence, which they never possessed; and this fancied excellence, whatever it may be, atones, in their view, for every defect, and forever prevents an attention to those important acquisitions, without which, favor is deceitful, and beauty vain. Such persons forget, that their beauty shall soon be consumed, and their beautiful garments employed to cover a mass of corruption. Whence then is all their pride and boasting? To corruption, each of you must soon say—Thou art my father; and to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister—Value not, then, the robes of ostentation, and the trappings of vanity. Remember that the moth, which shall feed on that delicate flesh, will soon arise, and flutter in a richness, a sumptuousness of dress, with which you, in all your glory, were never arrayed.

Mothers! you have vowed to bring up your flock, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It is your province, to regulate the manners and the dresses of your children: and let not an over-weening, an ill-placed affection, suffer you to look with an eye of complacency, on the indelicacy, or the extravagance of your children. Daughters! you blushed,

in conscious guilt, when you first assumed the half-formed garments of Eden. Restore the garb of delicacy and modesty to your forms, and let the coloring of virtue return. Banish that extravagance in your apparel, that profusion of ornament, and that gaudy attire, which better become the butterfly than the woman; and which are ever the marks of a weak, a vain, or an empty mind. Adorn yourselves in modest apparel, with shame-facedness and sobriety; not with brodered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array, but with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which, in the sight both of God and man, is of great price.

II. It remains, in the second place, that we attend to the virtue of modesty itself, as existing in the heart, and expressed in the language of the Apostle, by "shame-facedness." "I will, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shame-facedness and sobriety." We should lose much of the force of this exhortation, were we to consider it as extending only to the laws of decorum. It reaches to the heart. True modesty is a gem of inestimable value; and in a woman, indispensable. In the language of a heathen writer, we have in few words, what, if written after, might justly be considered as a paraphrase of this part of our text—" 'Tis not gold, emeralds, nor purple, but modesty, gravity, and decent deportment, that can truly adorn a woman." Modesty is an ornament which nothing can purchase; producing a delicate reserve, equally distant from prudery and wanton boldness—inducing a demeanor singularly discouraging to the insolent attempts of the vain, the wanton, and the familiar guest. It is the almost necessary result of innocence and worth. It is at once, the test and the guardian of virtue. The various decencies, whether of dress or of manners, which flow from a heart possessed of it, are rather its own genuine effect, than the results of education. By strict observance of the rules of art, its counter-

feit may be obtained ; but the reality, is, in every instance, the gift of God. Impurity of heart, is utterly inconsistent with the possession of this virtue ; although such impurity is often disguised with its semblance.

There is not, in the rational world, an object more disgusting, than a wanton, or an impudent woman : nor, on the other hand, one more pleasing, than she who is truly modest from a principle of piety. And so prevalent is this sentiment, and so sensible of its truth are the abandoned of the sex, that the world is filled with counterfeits. But how immense is the difference, between the downcast eye of conscious impurity, and the retiring modesty of virtue ! From the one, we turn with emotions of indignant pity : from the other, we recede with a painful fear of wounding a child of God. There is a “ shame-facedness ”—an awkward bashfulness—which can never speak, or speak without trembling. This, though it may consist with, should never be taken for, modesty itself ; for it most commonly attends those, who, in their retired hours, use the most unlicensed freedom. True modesty is not inconsistent with affability. On the contrary, it is compatible with the utmost freedom, when that freedom is governed by discretion. This teaches both time and judgment. A misplaced confidence, will often expose, even a modest woman, to suspicions of indelicacy. Hence appears the necessity of an acquaintance with the world, and a knowledge of the human heart. And hence, also, the necessity of gaining this knowledge, not through the superficial writings of human authors merely, but by the study of that perfect source of information, the word of God. Human writings rarely instruct, on this subject, without corrupting the mind. The lessons of wisdom contained in the inspired writings, are always accompanied with such sanctions, as tend to suppress the remotest suggestions of the depraved heart. The very idea of conversing with

God, if we have any just conceptions of the holiness of his character, and the purity of his law, awakens the soul to vigilance; and guards it against the indulgence of those thoughts, which the very nature of the subject is calculated to excite.

It may be necessary, to exhibit the means, by which this principle of virtue may be lost; either by one false step, or a gradual decay. The most powerful of these means, because they excite the least suspicion of danger, are, either intercourse with vicious company, or improper books.

There cannot be devised a more effectual method of corrupting the minds of the young, and the inexperienced, than that of suffering them to mingle promiscuously with persons of either sex. It is in this way, usually, that the first lessons of indelicacy are learned; and that those who have been educated in the refined sentiments of christian purity, become tainted with the poison of worldly morality. 'Tis from the sentiments and the examples of those with whom they are permitted to associate, that they are first emboldened to "overstep the modesty of nature." In these mixed companies—from which parents must be excluded, or conversation, and freedom, and care, be banished—they are taught, by the example of their superiors in age, to cast off that reserve, which keeps the bold at a distance, and silences the tongue of vulgarity. It is here, where no suspicion enters, that the double meaning jest, and the loose song of ribaldry, wear away, by repetition, the blush which they first enkindled; and with the blush, the purity that occasioned it. It is here, that the frown of indignation, and the modesty that excited it, at an indecent tale, are gradually lost; and the rays of complacency, reflected upon the brow, from the undisturbed countenances of those Heroines, who secretly scoff at the delicacy they never possessed. Even the reservè and diffidence which they pos-

ness, when first introduced into such societies, keeps back the expression of the indignant emotions which they feel; and the delicacy which is wounded, is made the instrument of its own destruction. A thirst for society, so natural to the young, prevents their use of those means by which their modesty is to be preserved. A fear of future restraint, as well as that of offending, inclines them to conceal from their parents and friends, the shocks they have sustained; and they continue to frequent public places, and promiscuous companies, till little of that sensibility remains which should ever distinguish the female character. Ignorant of the characters with whom they associate, they go out, like Dinah, the child of Leah and Jacob, “to see the daughters of the land;” and too often, like her, meet Shechemites in their society, by whom they are defiled. Happy would it prove for them, and for society, would the daughters of the land, like Ruth, cleave unto their mothers; and say, like her, “entreat me not to leave thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.”

Public exhibitions, and places of mixed societies, have never been found, within the compass of our experience, to contribute, either to the increase or preservation of that “shame-facedness” which the Apostle recommends. On the contrary, they have almost invariably, been found to contaminate the heart. A look, a gesture, or a sentiment bordering on looseness, (and in such places these are innumerable) have done more to corrupt the imagination, than a thousand gross and direct applications to the passions. The places in which virtue, in any of its forms, can be thus artfully exposed; and those rooms in which modesty is thus liable to be wounded, or rather, insensibly destroyed, should be considered and shunned, by every virtuous woman, as anti-chambers of hell. We are indeed told, that virtue is

only to be known by being tried; and therefore, that our daughters should be exposed, in all societies, to the language, the address, and the arts of those of their own and of our sex, not absolutely expelled, for the grossness of their immorality, from civil society. But it is a tale of falshood, and the sentiment contained in it, is full of corruption. We are also told, that those public exhibitions, in which all the arts and stratagems of either sex are represented, are favorable to morality : and many have the weakness and impudence, to say publicly, that such exhibitions are guards to virtue. But the fatal experience of thousands can testify, that at these exhibitions, the bands of virtue were first loosened, and finally dissolved :—that there, the passions were first enkindled, which consumed them :—that there, they first conceived sentiments destructive to their peace, and became enamoured of practices, at the thought of which, while their modesty remained, their hearts revolted :—that there, their cupidity was engendered, or, at least, suffered to pollute the soul, and excited to such vehemence, as to prove the occasion of their irretrievable ruin. No woman, it is confidently believed, ever returned from such a scene, with a purer heart. The sentiment and the scene, which, on the first representation, excites a blush on the modest countenance, and a chill of indignation throughout the frame, is, on the second perhaps, succeeded by a feebler struggle—soon endured without shame—and next, welcomed. But none, other than they who, by familiarity with such scenes, have experienced the progress of the downfall of this virtue, can describe the astonishing rapidity with which modesty recedes, and its opposite advances. Circumstances may vary the rapidity of the change ; but on every mind, uninfluenced by extraordinary checks, a change will be produced. The scarcity of the genuine fruits of this virtue, is attributable, not only to an association with unworthy companions, and to the

frequenting of what are called, public exhibitions of life and manners; but also,

In the third place, to injudicious reading. There is a species of writing, in the general reading of which, no woman, who possesses this virtue in its genuine purity, can delight. By whatever name it may be called—whether Tragedy, Comedy, Farce, or Romance—it is, with few exceptions, though written professedly, in many cases, for the female sex, unfit for the eye of modesty. And, in proof of this, it is only necessary to state the fact, that no woman of worth, would venture, in presence of the other sex, nor even of one class of her own, to repeat, in the same language, all the incidents of a single volume. These books, not only impart wrong views of real life, and engender false notions of happiness; but so blend together virtue and vice, that it would be difficult, even for the nicest casuist, to separate them. In this view, therefore, they are highly injurious to the *morals* of their readers: but they are equally inimical to the *heart of piety*, when considered in their relation to this subject. How then, are the sex degraded, when, for their use, our public libraries are crowded with romances—and how do *they* degrade themselves, who confine their studies principally to books of such a character! Why do they fly to their closets, to inspect the impurities of the Monk, and similar works, but to conceal from the world their own impurity? Why, but from a dread that others should learn, that little remains of that “shame-facedness,” which the Apostle recommends, rather, which God demands?

To deny that any good is to be gained, by the study of fictitious writers, would be a plain contradiction of truth: but to deny that the evil produced by such reading, is incalculably greater, would, if observation and experience may decide, be an equal violation of truth. Those therefore, who have a proper regard for that amiable virtue of which

we are treating—those who know and feel the dignity of their natures, and the value of their immortal minds—those who would rather be ornaments to society, and blessings to their friends, than to excel in the extent of their acquaintance with love intrigues—will cultivate a taste for a higher species of knowledge, than that derived from such writings—a more exalted employment, than that of studying them—a pleasure more refined than they can bestow—and will be assiduous to lay up a more nourishing food, for consolation and support in the retrospect of life.

III. I proceed to the last subject of consideration, suggested by the text. This is sobriety—a virtue, or rather, a course of conduct proceeding from a principle of holiness, without which, modesty of apparel would be of little personal benefit; and shame-facedness, but a suspicious covering. By an unaccountable madness, the world have generally been prone to consider giddiness, and thoughtlessness, as inseparable from a female mind: and this levity, has, by some means, in their estimation, become transformed into a virtue. Their early studies, and their later avocations, (I speak of those of the higher classes of society) are, but too commonly, of a description which do them no honor. But if they deem it (as they certainly must) an insult upon the sex, to be esteemed triflers, why should they not disappoint the expectations of the world, and cultivate the virtue which christianity recommends? Why should they be averse to that sobriety, which only can dignify them in the eyes of their worthiest admirers? Christian sobriety never stoops to trifle with serious things; nor to be ever trifling about nothing. A woman without reflection, is but a mere puppet in society, and can only please as puppets do.

The sex, however, disclaim the demerit of whatever they possess of vanity and frivolity, and of their want of the more solid and substantial accomplishments. And doubtless

they complain with propriety, of injustice in the other sex, in the neglects which attend their education, and their necessary deficiencies in consequence of those neglects. But aside from the scientific accomplishments of the mind, they complain with no appearance of reason. Their deficiencies in the virtues of the heart, be their literary education what it may, are chargeable solely, or principally, on themselves. And did they generally consider their consequence—did they realize that they are possessed of immortal minds—did they feel the value, the immortal worth, of these—they never would submit to be debarred a species of learning, infinitely more valuable than that taught by human sages. From these treasures of wisdom and knowledge, no human arm can detain them. From drinking deep at the fountain of divine learning, no human power, without their concurrence, can prevent them. This, in spite of the laws imposed by custom—in spite of our illiberality—they may obtain. They cannot, generally, be their advantages what they may, become politicians, philosophers, and warriors : but they may become *christians*. From the word of God we may learn, that the great Creator designed woman to move in a different sphere from that of man ; and all the directions given to her in the sacred volume, while they recognize her importance in society, seem to imply that her only empire is her household : to no other should she aspire. “Teach them,” says the Apostle, “*to be sober, discreet, chaste, and keepers at home.*” This sphere, in which heaven has placed them, is sufficiently large to employ all their time. To fill their places with dignity and usefulness, requires no small share of wisdom ; and to discharge with fidelity, the difficult duties of their apparently humble station, will engage all their virtue. On their virtue and fidelity here, depends, in a great measure, the happiness of the world. Think not then, for a moment, that God has degraded—He

has highly exalted,—the sex. 'Tis through the piety, the care, the watchfulness, the indefatigable zeal of mothers, that the sons of men are trained up to virtue. 'Tis through them, as God's instruments, and under their fostering care, that virtuous habits are first formed, that the morals of society are exalted to the christian standard, and the world preserved from an universal corruption of manners : and hence appears the wisdom and force of that maxim of the king of Israel, so often repeated—"The price of a virtuous woman is far above rubies." And from the extensiveness of the influence of woman in society, either good or evil according to her character, we may learn the justness of the following sayings of the same author. "For three things, the earth is disquieted ; and for four, it cannot bear. For a servant when he reigneth ; and a fool when he is filled with meat. For an odious woman when she is married ; and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress." Happy for the world, that the wisdom of God has given to those whose influence is so extensive, a situation peculiarly favorable to virtue. That the situation of women is such, is evident from the undeniable truth, that the number and piety of christian professors throughout the world, is altogether in their favor ; and on no other principle, can we satisfactorily account for the existence of this fact. How aggravated, then, must be the misery of those who, enjoying the best means for becoming virtuous, and the most favorable situation for the inculcation of virtuous sentiments, cast off the restraints which God has imposed, leave the sphere in which he has placed them, and, by a violation of his commandments, become either useless, or burdensome to the world !

How important, then, to guard against the first inroads upon virtue, and to cultivate the temper of the christian ! 'Tis not for want of ability, but of inclination, that women are not more generally proficient in this science. 'Tis, also,

because their sobriety is often the result of views of *policy* merely, instead of being grounded on the eternal basis of love to God. Innumerable are the cases, in which the christian rules of sobriety *will* be violated, if the general temper be formed, or the conduct founded, on any other than christian principles.

Let women, then, consider their high destiny, and court the approbation of their consciences, rather than the applauses or flatteries of the world. Let their labour be, to obtain the smiles of him who searcheth the heart, rather than the admiration of those wifings who are captivated with an outside. "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." To be polished after the similitude of a palace, will avail but little, if the inner apartments be unfinished, or filled with vanity and uncleanness. The reflection of having been surrounded by the popin-jays of the age—loaded with adulation—and crowned with the perishing laurels of time; will afford no satisfaction, to the soul thirsting for immortality, when it shall be summoned to leave its earthly tenement. But the remembrance of having honored God, and blessed the world, by a life of piety, usefulness and sobriety, will give joy unutterable, to the departing soul, when Jesus shall beckon it to his arms.

## SERMON IX.



THE DUTY OF CONFESSING CHRIST.

MATTHEW x. 32, 33.

*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*

**I**T is a sentiment of inspiration, too little known, or too little regarded, that the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, and his blessing in the habitation of the just. By the wicked, are meant such as are not willing, freely to avouch the Lord to be their God ; to subject themselves to his government, and bind themselves to the obedience of his laws.—For so is the will of God, concerning all who have forsaken their Father's house, and hastened after another God. They who are thus alienated from the life of God, are strangers to the covenant of promise—His covenant of life and peace is not with them : and they only are numbered among the friends of God, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on this covenant as the only hope of fallen man. These

only, are entitled to the blessings which God has promised to the righteous. Such is the language of the Old Testament, and these sentiments are confirmed in the New. Our Saviour, of consequence, when he sent forth the Seventy in his name, bade them, into whatever house they entered, first say, Peace be unto this house ; and if a son of peace were there—a friend of God—to leave their blessing in God's name : but if not, said he, your peace shall return to you—that is, you shall leave every house, in which you find no friend of his, under the curse of God. The promised blessings of the covenant shall never be theirs, who spurn its offered benefits, and decline to subscribe heartily to its obligations. But the voice of rejoicing, is in the tabernacles of the righteous. God has made with *them* an everlasting covenant, to do them good ; and upon them, and their seed, his blessing rests forever.

To the intelligent and attentive hearer, it is needless to say, all this is confirmed and sanctioned in the text. How clearly, then, is it the duty and the glory of us all, cordially to subscribe to the covenant of grace presented in Christ.

Let me shew you, first, in few words, what it is to confess Christ—Secondly, whence it appears to be the duty of us *all*—And thirdly, enforce this duty, by the sanction annexed to the injunction.

I. To confess Christ, in the sense of the text, is not merely to admit the superior excellence of his character, and the transcendant importance of his religion. The most licentious among men have done this, both in the sobrieties of life, and the solemnities of death.

To confess Christ, in the sense of the text, is not merely to be willing to espouse his cause in periods of peculiar religious prosperity. Many, in such a state of the church, have done this, who, when persecution has arisen, have changed their ground, and abetted and comforted the enemy.

To confess Christ, in the sense of the text, is not merely to call ourselves his disciples, and eat and drink in remembrance of him, at the sacramental table. Many do this, whom he declares he will deny before his Father, and assembled worlds.

To confess Christ, in the sense of the text, is publicly to avow our attachment to him and his religion, with a cordiality which will bear the test of the most discouraging times, and the scrutiny of the judgment-day—With an affection, which will sooner die for him, than deliberately and perseveringly deny him. It is publicly to avow ourselves Christ's friends, with a temper, preferring rather to be hated of all men for his name's sake, than to secure the highest possible advantage which men ever promise themselves, in either the speculative or practical denial of him. Such a cordiality as this, will endure *all* trials: it will triumph over every enemy. The man who possesses it, will endure unto the end; and he who does this, shall be saved, saith the Lord. The exposition, which essentially varies this view of the subject, is inconsistent with the context, and the whole tenor of the gospel. To make such a profession of religion, is to confess Christ before men; and though we are often told, in answer to these remarks, that profession merely is worse than in vain, it will be kept in mind, that the sentiment we are now secondly to illustrate, is no contradiction of this answer. It is not mere profession, which we allege to be the duty of all. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping the *commandment* of God.

~ II. How, then, does it appear to be the duty of us all thus to confess Christ? If this duty can be shown to be binding on *all*, it will be on them who neglect it, to satisfy themselves, and to satisfy their Judge, that they are not the men—ashamed of him and his words—of whom the Son of

man will be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.

1. That this duty is of universal obligation, appears, then, in the first place, from the explicit and universal command of Christ. This is contained in the commission he gave, at first, to his Apostles. When he bade them preach the gospel to all nations—to *disciple* and baptize all men in his name—he gave, through them, to mankind, a command to receive, embrace, and adhere to his religion, in the face of the world, from which it required them to separate. If to do this, be not possible for any other, than the man who makes such a profession of religion, as we have shown to be implied in confessing Christ before men, then is it the duty of all, to whom the command has reached, to make such profession. In the execution of their commission, the Apostles went forth and preached every where, that men should repent, and believe the gospel—observe all its ordinances, in the spirit and design of their establishment—and that being first *willing* to do their duty, they should bind themselves to do it, by solemn covenant.

There is a distinct command of Christ, necessarily *implying* the obligation of all for whom he died, to commemorate his death.—“This do, in remembrance of me”—is an *explicit* command, only to his friends : but, as all men are laid under obligations *to be* his friends, by his disinterested sacrifice of his life for them, the command, by implication, extends to as many as were ever his enemies. Now, as he cannot receive the atonement, who does not cordially believe ; so, neither can he receive the symbols of Christ’s body and blood, to the end for which they were designed, without a sincere *profession* of his belief. We cannot, then, seriously doubt, that such is the duty of us all : for since no man, under the gospel, can take *neutral* ground—since

every man is either the friend, or the enemy of Christ—every man is included in the command, to commemorate his love in dying for him.

2. To confess Christ, is the duty of all, inasmuch as it is but an act of justice to God. Justice consists in rendering to all their dues : and who does not know, that, to the perfections of God, are due the most public, explicit, and cordial acknowledgments, of all his intelligent offspring ! He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father. Such a profession of christianity, therefore, is, demonstratively, the duty of us all ; and the tender and solemn appeal of God to our consciences must not pass by us unregarded.—“ If I be a Father, where is my honor ? If a master, where is my fear, saith the Lord of Hosts, unto you that despise my name ?” But “ to them who fear it, shall the sun of righteousness arise, with healing in his beams.”

3. In the third place, the duty of confessing Christ arises from our social relations ; and is obvious, from the connection in which God has placed us. We live in the midst of society. Our conduct is inspected by men ; and is fitted, whether it be good or ill, to have influence on those by whom we are surrounded. It often does have an influence, such as its tendency indicates. All considerations, then, which go to evince the propriety of our attachment to our supreme Lord and Law-giver, serve equally to show, that it is our duty to express that attachment in every honorable and lawful manner before men. Especially, is this manifest, in view of the reigning defection from God. The apostacy of our race brings us all into suspicion. Respect to the divine declarations, leaves us no ground to believe any man the friend of God, who does not avow himself such, and justify that avowal by a correspondent life. Not to confess Christ before men, is, therefore, to countenance the crimes of disaffection, to take part in continuing the show of gen-

eral revolt. It is to leave men, without ground for supposing us the friends of God ; and so far, virtually justifying the conduct of the wicked, and condemning that of the just. I am aware, that it has been said, that religion is wholly a secret affair—involving affections and actions, of which man has no cognizance—lying only between God and the soul. But I have looked in vain, to find this saying supported by divine authority. The Law of God, on the contrary, teaches us decisively, that the religion, which does not extend its influence to the welfare of our neighbour, in the same degree as to our own, is not acknowledged in heaven—That the religion of any man, which is of no use to his neighbour, is useless to himself. For this, wo is denounced against him who makes others to transgress. For this, all who are disposed to be on the Lord's side, are required, by positive statute, to cease their indiscriminate connection with the world—“wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing ; and I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

Love to God and our neighbour, then, and the proper manifestation of such love, are so entirely incompatible with the neglect to confess Christ before men, that a public profession of religion would be the obvious duty of us all, had we no explicit command. Consider this argument a little more at length. Are we not bound, by every tie of humanity and religion, of parental and fraternal affection, to help our fellow men to heaven ; and, for this end, to furnish them in all things, an example of obedience to God—a holy example ? But is there any thing holy—is there any thing like obedience, in throwing the weight of our influence, whether great or small, into the scale opposed to the cross of Christ ? Is there any thing like obedience, any thing like love to our neighbour, in countenancing the delusion, that a

man may be wholly on the Lord's side, and altogether a christian, though he do not confess Christ before men? No good man will say to the Lord, in the unsoftened impudence of Cain, "am I my brother's keeper?" No man of good judgment will affirm, that to neglect to confess Christ, is not, in *our* circumstances, to lend our influence, and give countenance, to the unbelieving world. The church are authorized to suppose, and the world *will* suppose, that he who does not *profess* to be a christian, is *not* a christian—That he who does not *pretend* to be the disciple of Christ, is *not* his disciple. And this, because, as a general rule it is a correct one, that men are no *better* than their professions indicate. Profession is now so easy and so safe, and that branch of charity which hopeth all things, (not contradicted by palpable evidence) so generally practised in our churches, that he who neglects to *profess*, withholds unnecessarily one positive proof, however weak it be, of loving God, and his neighbour. Can any such man say, he has rendered to all their dues?—That he has been just to God; benevolent, to the extent of his ability, to his neighbour; and faithful to his own soul?

4. But, over all, Christ's relation to us, as our REDEEMER, renders obligatory on us, the cordial profession of his religion. Let us forget, for a moment, every other relation. Let us forget our obligation, even to Christ himself, arising from the perfections of his nature, the glories of his person, and the excellence of his righteousness. Let us overlook, too, all our obligations to him, as the author of our being, as the upholder of those heavens, and the source of all physical supplies, to this dependant, and richly stored, and populated earth. Let us think of him now, only in the office of our REDEEMER, executing, with unparalleled skill, and kindness, and grace, the whole work of enlightening, and ransoming, and subjugating to his dominion, a benighted,

enslaved, and revolted world. Think, a moment, what Jesus Christ has done for our souls—to what he has submitted—and under what circumstances, he has thus acted and suffered ! You do not need the detail. Think only generally, what Christianity has done for the Pagan—for the Savage—for Woman—for the victim of oppression—for the dying—for every prisoner of the grave !—Think at what expense—for what a race of beings ! See him, who was with God in the beginning, him who was God, descending from the throne, to take the nature and the form of a servant. Guileless and good, as his condition was humiliating, behold him, by the very creatures he came to save, hated, hunted, spurned from their presence, mocked, defamed, reviled, scourged, spit upon, crucified, and, in the hour of his death, forsaken ! And all this, without repenting or repining ; that he might bear our iniquities, reconcile us to God, and purify us from a moral loathsomeness, such as none but the most indecent images in nature, can duly represent. *Why* all this ? Was it for a reward from *us* ? O ! who can think of profiting a mind, rich in perfection, like his ? *Angels* dare not hope to do it. What, sinner ! canst thou do ? No, it was only for the joy set before him, of making the bad man holy, and the miserable happy. And is it, rational creature ! too much to expect in return, that you acknowledge your obligations, give him the chief place in your affections, and confess him, before men, the chiefest of your friends ? Is this an extravagant requital of his benefits ? Is this doing something *more* than a sinner's duty ? The most impoverished soul, that shall ever breathe the air, and pluck the fruits of the celestial Paradise, will blush for the man who ever thought it an unreasonable service. And the christian of chief attainments, even on earth, has learned unhesitatingly to sing,

“ Had I ten thousand hearts and lives,

“ My Lord, I'd give them all to thee.”

Such are the direct proofs, which are furnished us by the record, that a profession of christianity is the duty of us all. But to all these various evidences, clear and strong as they may appear to the serious and candid hearer, it will be objected, by one class of men, that God, by express statute, has forbidden the wicked to take his covenant in their mouth; that the command, of consequence, extends only to the pure in heart. In reply to this objection, let it be remarked, that the command is nevertheless binding upon all men, because it is the duty of every man, instead of living in sin, to break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by turning unto the Lord. For “the grace of God, which hath appeared unto all men, teacheth us, that denying ungodliness, and every worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world.” The confession of Christ, involves obedience to these commands, addressed directly to the wicked. The objection, therefore, has no validity: for “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;” and when, to execute this wrath, Christ shall be revealed from heaven, the objects of his vengeance will include all who know not, that is, acknowledge not, God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The plea of wickedness, for neglecting to confess Christ, is a denial of him, and, at the bar of Christ, is only a claim to be denied by him before his Father. Let no man longer deceive himself, through such a pretext, with the hope that he is not daily neglecting his duty in this particular.

To these various evidences, in relation to the duty of us all, it will be objected by another class of men, that the church is impure; its doctrines are corrupt, or its practice is profane: that the faithful city is spoiled; righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers. Let such men remember the only terms on which Christ will receive them. Let them

forsake father and mother, houses and lands, wife and children, and all that they have, rather than live in the denial of Christ. Let them go to the ends of the earth, rather than fail to confess him before men : and if, in all the christian world, they can find no brethren of the Lord, let them inquire how far they are from the denial of him, who has promised to maintain a church on earth, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. Rather, let them carefully inquire, if on them does not rest the curse of Meroz, who, because of improper attachment to the Canaanites, refused to come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Let them see (if they be serious in their objection) if they be not acting in direct opposition to the known will of God, and covering, under this specious reason, the rebellious objection, who is the Lord, that we should obey his voice ! If such be indeed the lustre of their righteousness, that the sacred fire of Zion is as darkness, when their light ariseth, then, of all men, they are the most pointedly admonished, to come up the help of the Lord ; and with the small cords to scourge, and with the fan to separate, and with the light of truth in doctrine, and of holiness in their example, to purify, till the Temple be freed from its mercenaries ; and all who worship in it, be clothed with the robes of righteousness, and attired in the garments of salvation.

There is still a third class of men, who, in defiance of all this various evidence, feel it rather their duty to decline a profession of christianity, for want of the qualifications of a christian. Yes, lamentable as is the fact, there are sober men, who thus make a merit of their disobedience, and compass themselves about with sparks, and walk in the light of no other fire, than their own hands have kindled. They neglect to confess Christ, because they are unworthy of the blessings of his disciples. What is this, but to say, they owe him less than is due to the world, or more than they

are willing to acknowledge ? What is this but to make disobedience a virtue ; and to resolve on perseverance in the neglect of privileges, because unworthy to enjoy, or unable to merit them ? What is it, but to make light of the invitations of the gospel, and to despise and reject both the offerer and the gift ? If this ground be tenable, the plea of unworthiness proves disobedience a duty. What a sentiment is this, to carry to the tribunal of him who has commanded us to confess him before men. Who ever heard, that it was more worthy of a sinner, to disobey his Lord, and refuse the service enjoined, than to do it, though it be but imperfectly ? O ! mistaken man, if the plea of *unworthiness* can furnish any recommendation, we may avail ourselves of it when we have *done* all that is commanded us. Even then, we shall be able to say, we are unprofitable servants—we have conferred no favor. Can any enlightened conscience, then, be satisfied with the excuse ? Does Christ offer the privileges of his kingdom to a sinner, and leave him innocent in refusing to receive them ? Harken, brethren ! These offended privileges were purchased by his blood ; and to despise the gift, is to despise the blood which purchased the gift, and thus, to despise the victim, and the God who ordained and accepted the sacrifice. The plea of unworthiness, then, considered as an objection to the evidence of our obligation to confess Christ, is in the last degree absurd. Christ does not stake our liberty to receive the gospel, on any contingency concerning our state ; nor found our duty, on our worthiness to receive the privilege. But, without any condition, requires us to confess him before men ; and bids us, without any reservation, use and enjoy all the privileges of the gospel, and whoever has any just sense of his obligation to Christ, joined with any sincere desires to perform the duties thence arising, must not fail to avow his attachment to

the Saviour, and join himself to his people and his ordinances.

But there is a fourth class, whose serious and sober life, and whose conscientious scruples, demand an answer, not to their *objections*, for they have none, but to their inquiries. Men who hope in God, who trust, at times, that they are the friends of Christ, but whose fears and doubts of their godly sincerity prevail. What in these circumstances is our duty? Unquestionably the same with that of any other man—to confess Christ—before which, an Apostle would only say, “**Examine** yourselves, whether ye be in the faith : prove your own selves ; Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates—He is in you, the only hope of glory.” The man who is sincerely desirous of avoiding every sin, (and this is characteristic of the christian) cannot be contented and happy, while living in neglect of so important a duty—while guilty of disobedience to so plain a command. He will ever have reason to reproach his conscience, till it cease to slumber ; and when it is awaked, it will never cease to reproach *him*, till he have respect to *all* God’s commandments.

The more tender our conscience, the more godly our jealousy, and the more solicitous we are to avoid hypocrisy, and fearful, lest we dishonor our profession—the more certain is it, that we shall be single in our aims, prayerful in our temper, and circumspect in our conversation. Happy the man, who thus feareth alway. To such it was said, what carefulness did it operate in you, yea, what vehement desire, yea what indignation, zeal, revenge, and anxiety in all things to escape sin, to be clear of guilt.

What then is the conclusion of the whole matter ? To the openly vicious, we say, you deny Christ in the sense of the text, whether you profess to be his disciple or not. As you value the soul, then, we intreat you, believe with the heart unto righteousness ; and make confession, with the mouth.

unto salvation. To all who do this, the promise is explicit; to all who decline, in wilful disobedience, the threat is absolute. Confess Christ then. *You* have nothing to sacrifice, in order to this, but your sins. In former times more was necessary. Christ was then to be confessed at the actual sacrifice, not only of sin, but of friends and reputation, property, liberty, and life. Yet there were men, who counted it all joy to fall into these divers temptations: who took joyfully, the spoiling of their goods: who cheerfully became as the offscouring of all things, and emulous of laying down their lives; thankful to have *so* much to offer in sacrifice to Christ. If, with scarce any of these temptations and sufferings, then, you refuse to follow them in confessing Christ, what will be your feelings, and what your condemnation, when you stand by their side, to hear the comparison of your characters, by your common Judge, and your respective correspondent doom! Should you—having no worse natures than they had, *fewer* obstacles, superior advantages, and perhaps no more vicious habits to surmount—should *you* still refuse, how will that comparison confound you! And who knows, but you may be called to the trial, before another sabbath is gone? Who can tell, but this very night, thy soul shall be required?

With all other classes of men, neither openly vicious, nor destitute of a secret hope that they are the friends of Christ, but who still live in neglect of a public profession of his name, we must seriously expostulate. You say, in sober contemplation of this subject, (and you say it by divine authority) “it is better not to vow, than to vow and not pay”—But can you say, by the same authority, that it is better neither to enter into covenant with God, nor be steadfast in that covenant, than to engage, in dependence on the grace of Christ, to be obedient? It may be that there are men, indulging the hope of impunity, in the neglect of this

duty. It may be there are some, who bless themselves in their heart, as did those under the legal dispensation, who flattered themselves that the charge of covenant-breakers should never rest on them—who said, we shall have peace, though we walk in the imagination of our hearts. But recollect the answer of Moses.—The anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, shall smoke against that man, and all the curses of the covenant-breaker, though he vowed not, shall be upon him : and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. Thus must it be done unto the man, whose heart turns away from the covenant of his God, in order to escape the curse. If the certain knowledge that we are not the Lord's, will not excuse us in the violation of this command, how much less, will those doubts and fears which accompany the hope that God is not ashamed to be called our God. Let us not forget, that unnecessarily to neglect a public profession of Christ, is to *deny* him : and though it may be possible, in some circumstances, without the ordinary form of profession, to confess him, it is difficult to conceive, in our circumstances, of the existence of such a necessity. Thus, beloved hearers, all men are shut up to the faith ; and all of *us*, to the profession of the faith.

Think not that I am thus earnest on this subject, merely because it would give *me* pleasure to see the church increase. God forbid ! No man shall ever accuse me, of urging on him a *profession* of religion, with a heart, or life, ready to contradict it. The *possession*, is essential to the honest profession of godliness. The two parts of duty are inculcated together in the word of God ; and presumptuous is the Teacher who disjoins them in his precept, and equally so, the professor who separates them in his example. But I would be earnest, and, if possible, excite a greater earnestness in you, because—

III. In the third place, the duty is enforced by Jesus Christ, with the most glorious and awful sanction. To those who obey the command, and do his will, the Lord and Judge of men, makes an explicit promise of glory, honor, and immortality. To those who wilfully disobey and neglect their duty, he solemnly proclaims it as his intention, forever to reject them. "Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I also confess, before my Father which is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also *deny*," in the same public and final Judgment.

Say not, then, with the hope of satisfying a good conscience—say not, with the expectation of thus obtaining the approbation of honest *men*—above all, say not, with the presumptuous confidence, of honoring and pleasing God; that you will not, cannot confess Christ, because you do not love him—because you are not a believer. Would it excuse *me*, in your consciences, were I to neglect my duty to you, as a minister of the gospel, all my life, if I could tell you at last, that I never was a believer? Would you honor me for this? Would you forgive me? Would you spare me your condemnation? I know you would not: I am conscious you *ought* not. How much less, on the same plea, will the Judge of all, excuse the man who neglects, all his life, his duty to *him*! I tell you, beloved hearer, he will *deny* that man before his Father; and then, if never before, that man will feel that is a fearful thing to refuse obedience to a plain command of the living God.

Weigh well, then, I conjure you, the import of these words. What is it to be denied by Jesus Christ in the Father's presence? To what will it be equivalent, in the day of Judgment? Recollect, the Father loves the Son, even as he loves himself—That all judgment is committed to him—That whom *he* commends, the Father accepts;

whom *he* denies, the Father disowns. To be denied thus, is then to be abhorred of God, banished from his presence, and made partakers of the portion and wretchedness of hypocrites. Yes, the unbeliever must share the same doom with the hypocrite, whom you so despise. God detests their characters alike, and has decreed them the same place. They shall share each other's company, and in the future world, dwell together without intermission, and without end. Are any of *you* prepared for this? Can you deliberately consent to be excluded from the presence of the Lord—from the company of angels—from the church of the first-born—from the spirits of just men made perfect; and from God the Judge of all? And do you prefer such a destiny, to the abandonment of your unbelief, or any of the pleasures of sin? Is a life of self-denial, sobriety, righteousness, and godliness, less pleasurable than a life of sinful gratification, worldliness, and impiety? Is such to be your deliberate preference? Mourn, then, as we may, over your wretched choice, and resist, as we will, the supposition of its rectitude, or impunity; still, we *must* submit. We can use no violence with you, but that of argument and affection: for man is free, and every creature must choose his course of life, and meet a corresponding fate. To persuade you to duty, by turning the will, is impossible with man: but all things, we know, are possible with God. Who, then, will confess Christ before men, without unnecessary delay? Who will come on the Lord's side, from an unbelieving world? Who will profess himself the friend of Christ? Let him act with decision, and in simplicity, and godly sincerity, and remember, that Christ commended *those* virgins only, who took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

## SERMON X.



### THE CHRISTIAN RACE.

#### HEBREWS xii. 1.

*Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus.*

**T**HE Olympian, Isthmian and Pythian Games, though unknown to us, were subjects familiar to the people whom Paul addressed, and fitly became topics of frequent allusion in his writings. The inhabitants of Greece and Rome were fond of these sports, and celebrated for their expertness in all athletic exercises. Rome being mistress of the nations in the first age of christianity, whatever was interesting in her customs and manners naturally attracted general notice. It was wise, therefore, in the sacred writers, to draw their illustrations of religious truth from customs familiar to their contemplation ; and this is their reason for representing the christian life, by the images of a *cross*, as the figure of its trials—a *combat*, as a picture of its dangers and conflicts—

and a *race*, as the emblem of its activity. In the foot-race here alluded to, many competitors voluntarily engaged. A great crowd of spectators, denoted by the cloud of witnesses, lined either side the course, and he only who first reached the goal, was decreed the prize. That prize consisted in a chaplet or crown of laurel, or some other evergreen, placed upon the brow of the victor, and in the acclamations of the populace. The christian life bears some analogy to this. There is a prize proposed to us. It is a crown of righteousness. It is decreed to him alone, who engages, against every solicitor of his heart, to devote it to God, and by faith in things unseen, to regulate his affections and his steps, and to overcome the world. To this enterprize he is called by the gospel; and to obtain the prize of this high calling, he is to keep the course prescribed by Jesus Christ. For this end, he divests himself of every incumbrance of flesh and spirit which might defeat his end; and labours to perfect holiness in the fear of God, and the hope of immortal life which is promised in Christ Jesus. To him he is to look, as his forerunner, and model, and hope; and also, as the Judge who awards the prize. While, to animate and encourage him in the honorable pursuit, he is to remember that the spirits around the throne, who have been witnesses to the truth, are also the witnesses of *his* exertions, and will shortly be the spectators of his defeat or triumph, as he is slothful in business, or fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. These, if I mistake not, are the thoughts suggested by the Apostle, both to the Hebrew and the Corinthian Churches, in these striking images; and their brief illustration, and an argument to enforce the enjoined duty, will form the several topics of this discourse.

1. First, and mark it, hearer! the christian life is a life of exertion—of holy diligence. From those strong expressions of the *freeness* of salvation, with which the gospel

abounds, the presumptuous mind infers that all human efforts to obtain it are fruitless. And because this practical error accords with the natural aversion of man to religion, and is congenial to his slothful habits, this delusive and fatal notion has many advocates. Whoever, notwithstanding, has carefully followed the great lights of the Church through their pilgrimage, examined their principles, inspected their conduct, and observed their spirit, has not been thus deceived. God is not mocked. Human effort, mighty, and persevering, he commands; and whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Wo, therefore, to him who is at ease in Zion. All christian example, as well as precept, assures us, that to work out our salvation, is no less necessary than to agonize to enter the way of life. In the *doctrine* of Christ too, we are taught, that though grace is sovereign and *free*, it is not inoperative—That though eternal life is the *gift* of God, it is a life of service for God, a life of vigilance and a labor of love. God works in us to *do* as well as to will, and imparts grace and strength to his people, not to render their efforts *needless*, but to make them *sure* and availing. Not to furnish an excuse, for standing all the day idle in his vineyard, but to render their engagedness efficacious to deliverance from moral pollution. What had been the end of the competitor in the foot race, had he declined to prepare himself, or refused to run, because he perceived that the crown was neither woven, nor *merited* by his exertions? Religious truth is never at war with common sense; and *her* verdict is, that no man can make his calling and election sure, who gives not *diligence* to this end. And for the same reason that the grain of our fields, though the gift of God, comes to us only through the channel of man's vigorous enterprise, and rational agency. Free, therefore, as salvation is, it will not come to him who *seeks* not the kingdom of God and his righteousness; nor, through any other channel,

than his own patient continuance in such seeking. What ! know ye not that in a race, men *run* ; and that a man cannot run without *toil* ; nor advance without continued effort ; nor reach the goal without perseverance unto the end of the course ? Neither, without doing despite to the spirit of grace, can a christian be barren and unfruitful in the work of the Lord. Every page of the gospel enforces some *duty* on man : and can either God or my neighbor do the work assigned *me* to do ? Or is any duty performed, without an effort of the mind and heart ? The christian life, is a spiritual journey to Zion—a passing from one stage of pilgrimage to another—a progression in knowledge, and hope, and holiness—a pressing toward the mark—a reaching forth to some point to which we have not attained. And is all this practicable without any exertion ? The cross we are required to bear, is not, indeed, a *material* burden ; nor is our daily self-denial, a literal yoke ; nor yet our life a mere foot-race : but as surely as the Gymnastic failed of the oaken garland, when neglectful of preparing himself by abstinence and unguents, or when he trusted to those preparations without subsequent application of his muscular energy, so certainly the sinner, if idle, will fail of salvation by Christ. What his hands find to do, is to be done with his might ; and if the kingdom of heaven is to be taken only by *force*, he must be violent in the conflict. The lagging traveller, and the slumbering virgin, are in danger. The light to which the path of the just is compared, is steady in its ascending course, and stops not till the perfect day. Cast not away, christian ! your confidence of obtaining the prize ; it has a great recompense of reward. But is this injunction addressed to the loiterer, the backslider, the man who is at ease because *he can do nothing* ? No, they *have* no such confidence ; or, if they have, the sooner it is cast away the more hope of them. From this explanation of the figure

you have seen, that without holy activity, no man lives the life of a christian.

2. Let us, next, look upon the *prize*, and see if it be not worthy to animate us to such exertion. Did it consist in any thing so little, and so short lived as a wreath, or crown—Had the author and finisher of the faith toiled and died, to secure to his followers dominion over a few millions of acres, and pledged them only a cap of gold, in token of the right to receive homage from a promiscuous company of well and ill-dressed sinners, the prize were unworthy one moment's solicitude; and one painful step to obtain it, would be disproportionate to the reward in a creature struggling for immortality. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, such is not the crown, suspended on our obedience to the gospel. Compared with it, the diadem of Alexander and the Cæsars, are children's toys. 'Tis intellectual and moral glory, hearers!—a crown of righteousness—for which you are to run. It is an empire over the world *within*, and a superiority to the world without. It is a seat on the throne of the Prince of peace; and alliance with all the nations of the redeemed. It is a *kingdom*—and, unlike all others, one which can never be subverted; and for which, when you have received it, you serve God with religious reverence and holy fervor. All other crowns are subject to irreverence while worn, fade and decay with time, sit heavy on the head of the wearer, and never, no, never reward the labor of earning—never compensate the disquietude of maintaining: and after all, like the plumage of the vain and empty bird, they must be shed. The crown of righteousness, on the contrary, derives its glory from its *intrinsic* worth. Such, christian! is the prize, of your high calling in Christ. Tell me if it be unworthy the solicitude and active zeal, which its authorized expectation demands?

3. But who is emulous of a glory such as this? Who of

this assembly would wear that crown? Let him, in the third place, lay aside every weight, and renounce every sin, however strongly and easily it beset him, and follow after that for which he is apprehended of Christ, with unabating diligence. For, whoever runs, like the Apostle, not as uncertainly, or fights, not as one beating the air, strips himself of every incumbrance; brings his body into subjection, and every high thought and imagination which exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and dies daily; the world is crucified to him, and he unto the world.

In the Isthmian game, the *course* was marked out for the racers by other hands, and not dictated by *their* wishes, or views of propriety; and no deviation from it was admissible. Equally well defined, and equally fatal a deviation from it, is the path of life, prescribed by Jesus Christ. *Our* will and wisdom, is neither concerned in settling it, nor in an attempt to mend. It is not to be conformed to the views of the world, but the world are to be transformed, by the renewing of their minds, to prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. We are to take the christian course, the high-way of holiness, as it is marked out in the gospel; and to keep it scrupulously, in defiance of every assault, in disregard of every human project to shorten or facilitate the way. From the word of God we may diminish nothing; to its testimony, add nothing. The bounds are fixed; and be the popular delusion what it may, and extensive as it will, he will *not* be crowned who dares to alter the direction, or abridge the course. Throw off, then, your reasoning pride, whence cometh contention; and receive the kingdom of God as a little child. He is not a *follower* of *Christ*, who makes his own system of doctrine, and precept, and consolation, and sanctions: nor he who seeks, or receives, honor from men, instead of that which comes from God only. The single eye must precede, and accompany

all our steps, or we are beguiled from the simplicity which is in Christ. Undiverted by other objects, and regardless of the devices of competitors, nothing remains to impede our progress. *Thus* moved and governed, the scandals of professors, the multiplicity of sects, the maxims, and habits, and customs of the church, and the world, the suggestions of the flesh, and the fiery darts of the adversary, will, neither in their single nor combined influence, be able to turn us aside or obstruct our way.

Part then, cheerfully, with whatever encumbers you, without delay, and run the race set before you in the gospel. Is it the love of the world? God dwells not in the same bosom with Mammon. Is it the love of pleasure? "She that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth." Is it a carefulness and trouble of heart about many things? But one thing is needful. Is it the perplexities of business, encroaching on the hours of devotion—the intrusion of friends—the entanglements of worldly relatives, occupying the place which is assigned to God, and attendance on his ordinances? Is it the desire of riches, or the engrossing thoughts of the benefits which their acquisition would afford? Is it any work of castle-building, which thrusts *present* duty from your solicitude, and finds you boasting of to-morrow, and diverting your mind from the course to the goal. Be it what it may, it must be laid aside, and left behind. Search every man for his *own* incumbrances. What are yours, ambitious christian! what but goads, which wound you in the face, and check your progress; instead of that thirst for the waters of life, which inflames desire, and urges on your pace? Of this nature are those emulations and strifes, which, under the pretext of duty to the public, or your *earthly* relations, prevent you from fulfilling the duties of your relation to God. Such also, in its nature and tendency, is that deference to the opinions of your neighbors, which, instead of keeping

you from temptation, leads you into it with diminished power to surmount it. O! when will you reach the goal, if you have first to gain the consent of all around you to the necessity of keeping the vale of christian humility? Farewell, ambitious christian! we shall never see your face in heaven.

I turn to the unstable and unsettled christian—always halting between two opinions—whose incumbrances are found in those endless speculations and disputes *about* the way, which leave him no time to walk in it; which occupy the space assigned him for working out his own salvation. *Yours*, unhappy men! is a dead weight, and a fruitless work—a busy idleness—a contest for the skeleton of religion, which destroys the appetite for the “sincere milk of the word”—the nutriment by which we grow. It is that critical spirit, which makes all the sermons you hear minister to your vanity, rather than to godly edifying. “Ephraim is a silly dove, without *heart*,” in his religious course.

What are your incumbrances, latitudinarian christian! but the lethargic fruits of a spurious catholicism; which, embracing every error as innocent, and every creature as an heir of heaven, leaves you secure in sinful indifference to the essential truths and duties of christianity? Rouse yourself from your apathy, by adopting the infallible adage, “no cross, no crown.”

Irresolute christian! you too, are incumbered. A religious lassitude sinks the spirit of active goodness to pusillanimous weakness, makes duty to God a drudgery, and leaves you lagging behind every pilgrim, or lurking in bye-paths as if there were a lion in the way.

And what are *your* incumbrances, self-sufficient and indocile christian! but a conceit of wisdom which even God’s appointed ordinances cannot augment, and which leaves you, from year to year, without any advances in knowledge, in humility, or any other grace? Of every such candidate,

says the oracle of God, "there is more hope of a fool than of him."

To give every man his portion, I turn to the formal and mechanical religionist, with the same enquiry—What are your incumbrances, unenvied man! always regular, but always unaffected—the organs of the body ever in place, and moving to fulfil their office, but the *heart* never moved? What but a chill, frosty state of soul, from which the vital fluid goes forth to fulfil its round, but with such a defect of impetus, as to furnish ground for alarm, lest it should never be able to creep back again? What, in fact, but a load of fleshly indulgences, hanging as lead upon the wings which, like the eagle's, should be bearing you toward the heavens?

But I must address a word to the desponding christian. You too, beloved victim of over-much sorrow! have a weight to lay aside. Not indeed an imaginary load; but, what is worse, a load of dark imaginations, originated by the tempter and accuser of the brethren. You have been too easily persuaded to a comparison of yourself with livelier christians, rather than with the word of God. You have been looking at the *degree*, instead of the *nature* of your affections. Put away that brooding over your impotence and infirmities, by which, instead of cherishing, you quench, the little spark of life within you. A cheerful heart does good like a medicine. Chide your desponding spirit, with the man of God—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why are thou disquieted within me?" Turn away from that melancholy spectre, by means of which, the spirit of the deep envelopes your path in mists, to keep off your eyes from the sufficiency which is in Christ. Cursed spirit! which leads you, by false application, of texts and providences, to deny or pervert the truth; and converts merciful corrections and reproofs, into demonstrative evidence that God has forsaken you. Let him no longer despoil you of

the christian armor—the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit—nor further stay your steps, by means of a self-interpreting spirit; but allow the word of God to be its own interpreter.

Recur now, a moment, to the significant figure in the text, and say, if any man, running in the race, would load himself with weights, cumbrous and discouraging like these? Does he not, rather, cast away every *garment* which decency can spare; much more, the heavy ornaments of his person; and even fillet down his hair, lest, by his *speed*, it be wreathen about his eyes, obscure his vision, and expose him to stumble or to lose his way. Thus wise, be ye, children of light! in your generation; and while your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, let your whole heart be engaged; and, undiverted by any thing around you, be sober and hope to the end, for the grace which is to be brought unto you, at the revelation of the Lord from heaven: not fashioning yourselves after the former lusts, in your ignorance; but “as he who has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.”

But these incumbrances are not *all*; nor, thanks be to God, are they found resting upon all. Yet who is there without an easily besetting sin? If escaped from all the pollutions which are in the world, through the *lusts* which have been noticed, are you *all* wholly clean, and pure from your sin? Have you made your way perfect, according to the measure of the stature of Chrst? Stripped of every thing else, if you spare one bosom sin, you hazard the loss of all things: and this you *will* spare if you do not detect it. 'Tis not enough that *others* discover it, if its lurking place be concealed from you. What then is that iniquity, professed enemy of all iniquity, and zealous friend of good works! which you commit so easily, you cannot tell how, so commonly you know not when? In the Apostle's time, it seems

to have been a sin *common* to the Church, and to believers without the Church. It led Nicodemus, and Nathaniel, and many others, to confess Christ only in the dark; not openly, for fear of the Jews. The dread of persecution, or the distrust of God's faithfulness to his promises, in which that dread originated, beset *them*? But are *you* afraid of the world's scoff?—Cannot you bear to be their jest and song?—Are *you* ashamed of the gospel of Christ, and of a practical adherence to its strictest precepts, lest you should be thought singular, precise, and superstitious? What is the sin which easily besets *us*; or is the church so pure that such an evil no longer exists? Whatever it be, common or peculiar, apply to it the language of the vine dresser—"cut it down"—let it no longer shade the plants of righteousness. Spare not a natural branch, nor trunk, nor a fibre of the root. With some *professing* christians it is *selfishness*; but the temper of Christ's followers is benevolence. With many, this generic sin exhibits itself in covetousness; but this is idolatry, and no idolater wins the crown, or wears it. In others, it betrays itself through a habit of slander, and rash judgment; but he who shall dwell in the hill of the Lord, "backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor." He who judgeth his brother, is not a *doer* of the law, but its transgressor. With some, it is a high look, and a proud heart; but it is the *poor* in spirit, whom the high and lofty One resolves to crown. It may be, with many it *is*, a habit of religious sloth—of spiritual slumber. Instead of Christ's righteousness, of which such make an empty boast, this habit will clothe a man in rags. Lukewarmness in the christian, is nauseous to all the witnesses who look on us from above, and excites the secret contempt, or suspicion, of all below, who watch either for our halting, or our improvement. Christian! be thine own accuser and judge, and not thy neighbor's. Search out thy

bosom sin : spare it not, for being your *own* : carry it to the altar of your Redeemer, and slay it before him. Even then, one thing more is necessary before the prize is won.

4. But having thus entered the course, and run well, you must endure to the end, or you cannot be saved. In the literal race, they who win, instead of *relaxing*, increase their speed as they approach the goal. Christian constancy, or the patience of hope, is indispensable to life. No matter how vigorous and prompt in preparation, or promising the prospects of the candidate in his earlier stage, if he faint before he has finished his course, the prize is lost.—“ If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” Temporary engagedness, and even superior skill, in the outset, is a pledge of final triumph which must be redeemed. Present obedience, is the only infallible proof of former conversion. Nor think the demand of the whole heart, and all the life, disproportionate to the Saviour’s love, or the disciple’s reward. The life of the christian, no less than that of the sinner, is but a vapor ; and though it were double toil and trouble, it would seem equally transient when dissipated : and then, how delightful the consummation ! The prize, not only undefiled and uncorruptible, but *eternal* in the heavens. And, to temperance in all things, is it too much to add patience and perseverance also ? Many have yet to put on the *sandals* : *all* have yet the race to run. In the undissembled language of the life then—in the unquestionable fruits of the spirit—let us say, we will subordinate every interest, suspend every business, sacrifice every passion, relinquish every darling object of pursuit, to accelerate our progress and secure our end. Like the children of this world, but with nobler aim, let us watch for every revolution of the wheel of Providence, that may animate us to constancy, enrich our prospects, and diminish the causes of doubt ; and which may afford proof, of the inexhaustible resources,

of the Author of the faith, and give additional security that the crown, promised to the victor, shall be our's.

II. Our second object is to enforce the duty. And for this—

1. Consider, first, the superior advantages of the competitor, in the christian calling :—the more glorious prize, the honorable character of the pursuit, and the examples set before us. The oaken garland, and the laurel wreath, the silver sceptre, and the golden crown, are perishable when won—are liable to *canker, rust, or fade*. Yet great are the hardships, long the toil, and discouraging the way, endured to obtain them. On the goal which terminates the christian's race, hangs a crown, which estimated, either according to its *beauty, cost, or durability*, human science is unable to compute, or comprehend. Its beauty, comparable only with Christ's excellence which passes knowledge ; the price of it, *his blood* ; and, in duration, lasting as his Throne.

2. Another advantage of the christian, over every worldly course, is, that instead of hardship, in the pursuit, you have pleasure ; in the end, instead of disappointment, triumph. The more diligent and laborious in it, the greater your refreshment ; and in a conscious doing of the Father's will, and a finishing his work with approbation, a luxury the world knows nothing of. While the *way* of transgressors is hard, all that is painful in yours, is chargeable, not on your *exertion*, but remissness. Toil, indeed, you must, and suffer too, if the spirit of glory and of God rest upon your head, as well as the blessing of many ready to perish : but toil and trial, are only an appendage to your *condition* ; the glory and the joy, result from the *nature* of the pursuit.

3. Over all, you have the advantage, not of *uninterested*, but disinterested *motive*. Know ye not, that in every earthly career, though *all* run, but *one* receiveth the prize ?—That contention of course, and envy, and wrath, and malig-

nant strife, mingle in the scene?—That even the successful adventurer, finds the joy of victory, and the spoil of triumph, embittered? Not so in this contest: and this is the disciple's boast, that *every* competitor may win; and that the more sure he makes his *own* success, the less is he in any brother's way. No place is found for animosity; but each, in honor preferring one another, helps on his rival's joy. Instead of shouting, and a sordid triumph, when a companion falls, he who is strong, bears the infirmities of the weak; and he who stands, gladly raises up the fallen, and encourages the faint. For our brethren's and companions' sake, we can speak comfortably to Jerusalem, till her warfare be accomplished; and, because the household of the Lord is one, still seek their good. Such is the pre-eminence of the *christian's* spirit—ever breathing good will to men, peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

4. Fourthly, whoever *obtains*, inherits, the crown to his own glory. The wicked are always in bondage. They toil for a master who gives them scant materials, requires the full tale, and yet takes all the avails of their labour to himself. At vast expense, they yield the God of this world the honor, and take their reward in drudging at his back. But God our master, seeks no profit from *our* righteousness; and whoever cheerfully serves in *his* kingdom, is sure to enrich himself.

6. Finally, my brethren, take for your example, in this nobler enterprize, the Patriarchs and Prophets, whose fidelity you see already crowned with success. Remember *whom* you follow—the excellent of the earth—men distinguished for all that is heroic in spirit, pure in intention, and praiseworthy in action—men beloved in the very heavens—men who, having trod the course before you, have smoothed the way for your feet—men now become the companions of angels, of Jesus our elder brother, and of God the judge of all.

O! shall the votaries of a mad ambition, run their career with enthusiastic ardor, and rise with the bird in daily song to compass the inglorious object of their toil; and shall heaven look down upon the heirs of immortality, and find them dragging heavily in the chariot of salvation? See, christians! the whole host of the faithful, ranging themselves along the lines of the course, eager to behold your progress. Imagine yourselves compassed about with all that cloud of noble witnesses, who sealed the testimony with their blood, watching your every movement, emulous of the pleasure of seeing you come off successful, and ready to fill the arches of heaven with acclamations, and songs of triumph, as you successively complete your labors. In conformity with this grand thought of the Apostle, imagine, when you begin to doubt, distrust, or loiter, that *here* stands the father of believers, watching, with parental tenderness and patriarchal dignity, his spiritual offspring of this generation—That *there*, you meet the eye which looked with contempt on the splendor of Pharaoh's court, because he had respect to the recompense of the reward—And that *yonder*, stand side by side, waiting your advancement, the noble army of Prophets, and Evangelists, and Martyrs, to encourage you; and the goodly company of the Apostles, who became all things for the elect's sake, to win you to Christ; and who, in their writings, still tenderly warn, by the terrors of his frown, and by the mercies of God, beseech you, that you neither faint, nor receive the grace of God in vain. See how they stand, reach forth, and gaze intently, solicitous to see the issue. See, high above them all, in the midst of the throne, stands a Lamb, as it had been slain, now crowned with light, a golden censer in his hand, with much incense, ready to be offered with your prayers upon the golden altar. Crowns without number lie around his feet, for as many as are written in the book of life. HE too, is a witness to your faithfulness,

or hypocrisy—He who *led* the glorious way, and opened the path to the sinner's re-ascent to God. See, he beckons you: the language of the token is, come up hither. And will you not look to JESUS?—For you he endured the cross, and despised the shame. You must look to him, for your model, and crown:—To his mysterious person, and his more mysterious love; to his offices, and his award. And, having seen his glory, and caught a glimpse of the prize, say if you can willingly lose sight, and take leave of them forever! The remainder of your course is short: the goal is near; and the prize suspended on your fidelity. Do you not hear his voice?—"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second death; but shall inherit all things."

What is your answer to the messenger of God; or shall he leave you hesitating? Stay, recording angel! till, from every heart in this assembly, you shall carry back the holy purpose of looking unto Jesus—till each shall have resolved, Lord, I will leave all, and follow thee. Presumptuous hope! while there are so many here, who are labouring to serve two masters. Too strait the gate, too narrow the way of life for them, who will not part with *every* incumbrance. And as we successively quit the theatrical scenes around us, how very few will be heard to say—"I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me in that day."

Hearers! though primarily addressed to the church, this subject has not a very remote application to the world. For in the eye of God, every man is a candidate, though every one is not a competitor, for the crown. It is not optional with you, as it was with the gymnastic, whether your name shall be entered on the list. The King and Lord of the whole earth *commands* you to run. By his authority your

name is enrolled : you are on the course, and if you depart through sloth, preferring the way which a depraved heart prescribes—if, to drop the figure, you lead an unchristian life, you lose, not merely a happy immortality, but, by trampling on the remedy for human guilt and wretchedness, and despising and rejecting the crown of life, incur an aggravated condemnation. The Judge will award to you a resurrection, but it will be to shame and everlasting contempt ! And if disgrace be unwelcome, even in presence of the mortal crowd which surrounds you here, how can it fail to be *intolerable*, when assembled worlds shall look on, and see you, who were once offered the crown, driven from the presence of God, and the abodes of the just, as unfit for the company which you despised. Can you meditate on such a fate, and not be appalled ? Can you anticipate it for yourself, or your familiar friend, and your heart endure ? Yet the evidence that you shall depart accursed, from the presence of your Judge, bears exact proportion to the evidence, that you are not now heartily engaged in his service, or seeking, with all the heart, the kingdom of God. If then, worldly man ! much of your life is already lost—if little, at the longest, remain, and the christian race require much assiduity and zeal ; and your holy activity is yet to be begun—if, even to this very moment, you are hesitating whether to have the world, or God, for your portion, you need neither Angel nor Prophet, to assure you, that you are neither already reasonably expecting, nor even in the way of obtaining, salvation. O ! look off from the paltry conflicts of an ambitious, sensual, and perishing world, and, like Jesus, for the *joy* set before you, despise the shame attached to the cross : put earth, and heaven, and the prayers of the church, in requisition ; and lay hold on eternal life.

## SERMON XI.



THE CHRISTIAN PILGRIM.

PSALM xxxix. 12.

*Hold not thy peace at my tears, for I am a stranger with thee;  
and a sojourner, as all my Fathers were.*

**T**HOSE who have been accustomed to attach the notion of glory to *condition*, and to consider royalty but another name for happiness, will think this strange language for a King! Even those of us, who have not learned to *feel*, when sitting at our own fire-sides, and surrounded by our families, that we are not at *home*, may doubt, if this can be the habitual language of any man. And yet, the sentiment it expresses is equally just in its application, both to kings and common men. The language employed to express this sentiment, is a perfect picture of human life. He is the child of fatuity, and a stranger to himself and his condition, who has not learned to feel the incertitude, as well as vanity, of human expectations; and to cry unto God, as a pilgrim in a strange country, who is ever journeying, and tarrying only for a

night—as a sojourner, who has no sooner pitched his tent, and begun to think of rest, than he is summoned to strike it, and be gone. Even at the age of an hundred and thirty years, we find the Patriarch Jacob numbering the period of his life by *days*; and comparing the pleasures of his way, to the toilsome stages of the weary traveller, which are few and evil. To the illusions of the world, then, and not to the diseased imagination of the people of God, are we to ascribe their widely different views of man, and the present state. It is a striking thought—God has so few friends in the world, that both He, and they who walk with him, are said to be *strangers* in it. “I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all the Patriarchs were.”

How striking the contrast! The children of this world are strangers to God, and the covenant of promise; while the children of the kingdom, are hidden ones, and strangers, in the world. Behold the distinction of the friends of God! They are but pilgrims in their own account—they walk with God, as strangers in a strange country—They seek another, and a better, as their home. Delighting to exhibit truth by antithesis, and contrast, and no subject offering so great scope for such illustration, as that of the difference between the righteous and the wicked, we hear them exclaim—“while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.” “We walk by faith and not by sight.” Thus the righteous plainly declare, that they have a house not made with hands. The friends of the world, on the contrary, here bury all their thoughts; and bend their exalted powers to acquisitions, which have their origin and end in time. They know not, experimentally, the simplest truths inculcated by the daily providence of God. Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue forever; and their dwelling places, and the lands called after their names, to all generations. Their posterity inherit their folly; and

the whole succession of their unbelieving progeny, walk in the obscurity of their example, and never see the light, till death begins to feed on them, and their beauty to consume in the grave, from their dwelling. They are foreigners, only in relation to the commonwealth of Israel; while the friends of God, are strangers here, and seek the pillar of cloud and of fire, in which the Shechinah dwells, to guide them through the wilderness to the promised land. "They are not of the world." They pursue with avidity the treasures which cannot rust and corrupt; which the hand of death cannot ravish, nor the lapse of time, or change of state, destroy. Transient visitors, is their description; who, as sorrowful, are yet always rejoicing—who buy as though they possessed not; and who use this world as not abusing it. Yes, the christian *uses this* world; but, setting his affections on things above, avoids *their* idolatry who love it. He is a traveller, who visits necessarily the places on his way home, but without partaking in the enthusiasm of those who are settled there, or entangling himself in their avocations, and their contests, or ensnaring himself in their schemes of business, or of pleasure. He has only time to secure the necessary refreshment, before he must resume his journey. He makes no permanent interests there, and takes up no possessions, which may irresistibly plead for his return from the advanced posts he has already gained. More than convinced, that this is not his rest, because it is polluted, with a heaven-directed aim, his temper and his conduct say—I journey to the land of my nativity; and till I put off these travelling habiliments, my marred and tattered aspect tells me, I have not yet attained, and urge me onward to my Father's house. Thus do our sacred guides teach us to ascertain our character, relations, and destiny, as spiritual beings, by an inspection of the conduct of the home-bound

traveller, who wandered, almost in infancy, from the embraces of a parent into a foreign land.

Let us suppose him, in the first place—however long he has lived abroad, however dear has become the place of his early life, and close his alliances—resolving to return to the distant country of his birth, and now commencing his journey. How many conflicting passions, and interests, must agitate his bosom! What emotions must accompany the thought of taking leave of the spot, the concerns, the companions of his early years, and all the objects fondly cherished, through his inconsideration of this removal! But he has resolved: he has weighed the advantages of the change. Duty to the author of his life, and the interests covered by the paternal roof, have cast the die, and his purpose is fixed. “I will arise and go to my father.” He has tasted the bitterness of sin, felt the pang of separation from his God, and the insufficiency of all things, to supply the place of *his* approbation. He has heard of the land, none of whose inhabitants say I am sick; and of the river of the water of life, proceeding from the throne of God. He has been shown the promise of the proprietor, that the inheritance is for the returning prodigal, through the intercession of the obedient Son; and is sure to all who seek it “by patient continuance in well doing.” Men who are journeying to the place, of which the Lord has spoken, encourage him. He has surveyed, impartially, the fruits of obedience and sin: the gifts of this world and the next are compared; and the choice, between the portions, is made. He has made trial of his willingness to relinquish all his early prepossessions and habits, for the kingdom of God. After many violent struggles, he has thrown himself into the scale against selfishness and the world, resolved to strip himself of every incumbrance, and, in the path of life, set his face towards Zion. Governed by the maxim, that no wise man begins a work

till he has counted the cost, he has not commenced his journey without ascertaining, both the *character* of the celestial country, and the *way* to it. The difficulties of that way have also been considered, and the prospect of ample strength to surmount them, and more than ample compensation for his labours in the end. Thus far the analogy is perfect. For does not even he, who removes only from one part of the same continent to another, first inform himself of the character of the people, the quality of the soil, the temperature of the climate, the facilities of the country, that the end of his removal may be secured? Will he resolve to proceed, without knowing the sacrifices he may be called to make; and whether his resources may be depended on, as adequate to his needs? Does he rationally hope to succeed in his project, without adapting means to ends; and conforming to the rules, necessary to render safe and sure the hope of accomplishing the end? Does a man think of travelling in *state*, in a way which admits only of the attire and staff of a *pilgrim*? Will he make no provision to secure himself against defeat? Then must he abandon the enterprise, or perish by the way. Thus you see, every thing depends upon *setting out* right, if we are going to heaven. Faith in God, and the security of *his* aid, is the *first* step. Without this, the traveller towards Zion will assuredly faint, and all his labour will be lost, and his expectations be cut off. There be *many*, who shall *seek* to enter in, but shall not be able. Think not that you can dispense with those thorough investigations of sacred *truth*, which correspond only with the zeal and sincerity of the man, who is about to remove to another continent. Think not, that a depraved creature may easily and carelessly make up his mind, to be a follower of Christ, to renounce his sins, and the world, for heaven. No! Acquaint thyself with God. Understand

the nature of the christian salvation. Know what heaven *is*, what is duty, and that nothing but the performance of duty, in humble dependence on Christ, can bring us to its enjoyment. Secure an infallible guide, to the good old way of the Patriarchs and Apostles. Possess yourself of their unconquerable spirit of devotedness to *one object*—God and his kingdom. Rely not on information, acquired by the *way-side*: seek it of him who cannot lie—whose word is faithful—not one promise, or testimony of which, shall fail. Recollect the end of them, who have depended on an arm of flesh, and been the sport of men, whose tender mercies are cruelty. The man who is to pass through the dominions of Princes of different character, and interests; and through deserts, where rapacious animals of different devices reign, must know from *unquestionable* sources, the laws, customs, exactions, and dangers of the country; and possess a character, and an armour, which shall secure his person from ruin, and defeat the devices of the crafty, as well as overcome the powerful, and those who lie in wait to devour. Then, if he go forward with humility, and trembling, it is also with the fairest prospect of reaching the place of his destination. He goes, guarded against *surprize*—every thing subordinated to the main design, he has no *backward* track to pursue—and, with the whole armor of God, he is prepared for untried dangers and conflicts. He is not soon discouraged, because of the way. Trial worketh patience, and victory inflames his resolution. The falls of the unwatchful hour, quicken his vigilance; and every snare, detention, and injury, excite his circumspection, and a more faithful observance of his instructions. So, the literal traveller, turns off his eyes from the vanities which tempt his delay; and instead of loitering, or resting, while it is day, to crop the way-side flowers, or gather the fruits which are not his own, moves forward, turning neither to the right hand nor to the

left ; remembering that the same zeal is necessary at the *close*, as at the *beginning* of the way.

Is the traveller to Zion tempted to indulge in unnecessary refreshment, and to languish in the race ? His guide cries aloud—"Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, we should seem to fall short of it."—"If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." What avails it to *begin* well, if we are afterwards willing to be hindered ? Pure and undefiled religion, not only at first *renounces*, but *keeps* unspotted from, the world. We may feel perplexed, but not forsaken ; and harrassed, but we may not despair. Faint but persevering, is the pilgrim's song, till the last enemy is overtaken, the last obstacle surmounted, and the last river passed. So the christian finds an antidote to the voice of curiosity and sympathy, of flattery and despondency, by keeping his Father's house in view. The caresses of the indolent, would turn him aside from the path ; and the plausible story of the carnal interpreter, check the vigor of pursuit ; but he meets them with reproof, and tells them, as he passes, of *resting* when he gets *home*. He has pity and help for his weary fellow-traveller, but he cannot wait the movement of the slothful, nor vacillate with the unstable, nor uphold those who dally with temptation, and listen to evil men and seducers. Though he faints for them as he passes by, he dare not *imitate*, lest he fall after the same example of unbelief. He hears the christian virtues reproached, from time to time, even by those who think themselves travelling in the same way ; but recurring to his directory, he learns a lesson of perseverance from his mistaken friends. What are their opinions and doings to the precept—"follow thou me."

But man has a *social* nature ; and, whether good or bad—whether in the way to heaven or hell—he is not fond of travelling *alone*. The christian pilgrim labors to promote

in others, a spirit of emigration to the heavenly land. *His* choice is not dependant on the will of a capricious world, nor his *success* with others, the condition of proceeding himself. While independently resolved, and cautious of so regarding others, as to neglect his duties to himself, it is still his heart's desire, and prayer to God, and, of consequence, his labor, to persuade a numerous company to go with him. It is a darling object, to multiply associates in the enterprise. *He* feels, in *them*, the dangers and the deaths he has escaped; and generously says—"now *we* live, when you" resolve, and "stand fast in the Lord." By cheerful toil, exhortation and example, as well as prayer, he strives to engage those by the way-side, to put in their lot with him; and take freely, all the advantage of *his* experience, on the subjects of this, and the better country—of the God of this world, and the God who is above. He recommends the country and the way, the business and the blessedness, of the inhabitants; and endeavors to prove that godliness, with *little* of this world, is gain; and is careful to exemplify the truth he inculcates, by the better character and the better hopes, the higher aims, and the more adequate consolations it has wrought in him, over the children of this world. Successful or not, he has the peaceful reflection, that *their* loss who despise, is not to be charged on *his negligence*; and this is a better source of peace than the world can offer, in the extremest latitude of its lying promises. O! to walk in wisdom toward them who are without—to be no occasion of *their* stumbling, is in simplicity and godly sincerity, and by the grace of God, to have our conversation among the world. 'Tis then, sinners fall not on the rock, but the power of christianity falls on them; and they have no cloak for their rejection of its Author, and resistance of the influence of his religion.

Like every other peaceable traveller, the christian pilgrim

is careful of falling out with his brethren by the way. The fruits of righteousness are *sown* in *peace*: they are nurtured, and matured under the same influence. No love of discord invades the bosom of Christ's disciples. Their hearts, and hopes, and pursuits, are united, and cannot be interrupted without violence to a holy nature, and a common head and guide. Peaceable, pure, gentle, and not easily provoked or alienated, are the friends of God. Contentions and strife, come not from above. Where the *grand* object keeps its ascendancy, the *minor* currents are absorbed, and all roll on together to the ocean of love. If any choose the unmarked road, he can only refer them to the *common* guide, and pursue his way, though it be in the fear he shall see their face no more. The soothing voice of *affection*, and not the roaring of the lion, is the well known voice of Israel's Shepherd. Peace and holiness united, constitute the favorite breath of this Shepherd's pipe. False is the friendship which allures us by any other sound. "Blessed is the peace-maker," without unhallowed passions, and sinister designs.

Finally, *progress* is the traveller's grand attainment. If home is the object, advancement must be the effect. Who regards the clouds and the winds, when solicitous for *home*? Or, if arrested in his journey, and subjected to the loss of a day, see how such an one prevents the morning dawn, and evening shade, and encroaches on the hour of repose, till he have *redeemed* the time. His diligence and activity increasing, as the object approaches its accomplishment; and when he comes near the spot where he is to spend all his existence, see how he forgets his toils, and gives a loose to rapturous joy. Must not the child of God then, on every glimpse of his Father's residence, spring forward with accelerated movement, in grace and knowledge, till he enter into the joy of his Lord! To pass to the transforming sight of his Redeemer, from amid the changes, and conflicts, of this state of

poverty, and sin, and darkness—this, this is life and immortality possessed. And shall not he who has it in reversion, be supposed to reach after it *eagerly*; and *press* to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ? Yes, this must be the purpose of the heart—this, the prize of the high calling of God.

Having concluded the illustration of the christian character, under the figure of a pilgrim in a strange country, returning to his resting place, and his home—

1. Let us ask ourselves, hearers! if the image be a just one? Is it true, that our present state is unfixed, unsettled—that we have in our wishes no continuing city here, nor abiding place? Is every thing precarious and transient but truth; and does the word of God live and abide forever, as the only vehicle of truth to the children of men? If it be thus—and who will venture his honor, and his honesty, on the denial of it—then who but the *real*, in opposition to the *nominal* disciple of Christ, as well as to the men of mere business, and the votaries of this world's God, have any claim to wisdom, virtue, or expectation of enjoyment? Who but the man who is a stranger to the affections, the desires, and the chief objects which form the main spring of all the movements of this great world, discovers any regard to truth? Who besides, possesses a character, corresponding, in any of its *moral* features, with his relations to God, with his present condition, or with his future prospects? Not one. The inspired description, is perfectly conformed to our own observation—“They are all gone out of the way: there is none that doeth good; there is none that enquireth after God.” “Man that is in honor and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.” He lives, as if incapable of knowing that he is to die; and dies, as if death were an everlasting sleep. He perverts the gift of God, as if happiness were only to be found at the greatest distance from its

source. Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him ; and the son of man, that thou visitest him !

2. If there are men in the world, who are not *of* the world, but exhibit, in the midst of it, the character of strangers and sojourners merely ; and who therefore essentially differ from others, as *Christ* differed, by having their hearts, their treasures, and their conversation, in heaven ; is it not obvious, as one distinct class of christians have always contended, that the influence by which they are made to differ, is wholly, and purely divine, and altogether of grace ? Is it possible, that any birth of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, or of any other than of God, should be adequate to an effect so peculiar, so holy, so consistent with the hope of a happy destiny ? Let the man who denies this doctrine of divine influence—Philosopher or Peasant—either seek that influence himself, as essential to his happiness, and “become a fool that he may be wise,” or bring us an example, from some former or the existing age, of one who lives and acts like a stranger on the earth, and yet ascribes it to some cause other than the holy spirit of God. Whither will he go, to bring us such an example ? From what temple of the living, from what record of the dead, will he be able to shew, that any others, than those who believe in divine influence, have been persuaded practically to confess, that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth ? And who, unmindful of the country of their nativity, once having believed, have refused to return ; but plainly declared, by actions which do not deceive, that they desired a better country than this, even an heavenly ? Let them bring us a man who plainly says such things, by the course of his affections, the object of his zeal, and sacrifices, and labours, and hopes, or we dare not say of him, as of the evangelical believer, God is not ashamed to be called *his* God. Ah, hearer ! men who walk by sight corporeal or mental, and not by

faith, say no such thing ; and they whose pilgrimage is from city to city, only to buy and sell and get gain, have chosen their portion in *this* life. And they too, who, sick of this vale of tears before they have taken hold on the promise that God has prepared for them a city ; and who would madly rush *out* of the world, or out of *life*, to escape its trials, plainly declare their ignorance of christian holiness, which is satisfied to wait patiently in well doing, for their felicity.

3. We perceive, from this subject, that *faith* has been, in all ages of the world, the only efficacious means of salvation. As it is written, “ the just by faith shall live.” Now faith is the substance, or cordial confidence, of all that God’s word teaches us to hope for ; and the inward witness of the invisible things which that word reveals. One set of men boast of *reason*, as adequate to all the purposes of holy living : but reason without faith to govern it, never carried one soul to heaven. Others talk of the sufficiency of *conscience* : but conscience without faith, leads others, as it did Saul, to persecute Christ and his disciples, as the offscouring of the world. Others still, add to reason and conscience, the necessity of *witnessing good examples*, and consider this threefold cord, as a sure restraint against sin ; and a sufficient excitement to holiness. Yet even the addition of a good example, cannot prove influential over the bad, because this best suits the taste of a bad heart.

Faith must remain the only efficacious principle of a conduct pleasing to God, which has ever actuated man since the apostacy. This only prompts the decision—that what God has said, is true. God has commanded, *therefore* it is good : God has threatened, it will *therefore* come to pass : God has ordered the event, *therefore* it is right : God has promised, *therefore* do I trust : God governs, *therefore* I submit : these are *his* precepts, *therefore* I obey. Now, thus to obey, hope, submit, and trust, is the sum of all our duty.

All duty, then, is the effect of faith—of nothing else : for, if any other cause could produce these effects, the Apostle would not have said, “ *without* faith, it is impossible to *please* God.” For obedience pleases him ; submission pleases him ; hope in the Lord, pleases him ; and trust in his perfections and providence. These, therefore, are all the fruits of faith.

The oldest, and the earliest friend of God, became so through faith. Abel thus offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain ; God testifying of his works, that they were righteous. Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob, all died in faith, and were moved by it to obedience ; expecting the performance of his promises, though they never lived to see them accomplished. They were persuaded that they would be performed ; and, though seeing the performance afar off, they gave up the world, for an interest in them ; and thus plainly declared themselves, strangers and pilgrims on the earth. They said this, not in words only, but by their *conduct*. Abraham, for example, said to the sons of Heth, sell me a burying place ; I do not ask a *settlement* among you ; I am but a stranger and a sojourner with you. But if he had considered this world as his home, and acted like an unbeliever, instead of wandering about, at God’s command, in Mesopotamia, he would have gone back to the place of his fathers’ sepulchres, and his carnal relations. But by leaving them, and by his conduct where he was, he proved that he had confidence in God, and that he sought a better country than that he had left—than that in which he was then dwelling under the tent.

4. In the last place, let him who *claims* the christian hope, exhibit ever to the imitation of those around him, who live upon the failures of professed christians—let him *faithfully* exhibit this distinctive character of the friend of God, and say to the world, as well as the God in whom he boasts—

Mark well the meaning of my tears ; “for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.” Dearly beloved ! I beseech you, abstain from sinful indulgences, from the very *appearance* of evil. Let your light so shine before men, that *they* may glorify your Father who is in heaven. Then, the world shall see, and acknowledge, the power and grace of God ; and renounce, perhaps, their sinful affections, pursuits and hopes ; and their interests no longer *seem* to clash with your designs, and joys, and labors. The pursuits of the worldling are but shadows. If he succeeds to catch them, he has gained but an infant’s toy ; and if he fail, even of *this*, he has exchanged his *soul*, for NOTHING !

## SERMON XII.



### THE ONLY PROPER OBJECT OF SOLICITUDE

PHILIPPIANS iv. 5, 6, 7.

*Be careful for nothing : but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God ; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

**DISTRUST** of God, lies at the foundation of all human sorrow. The world is full of crimination and reproach. Wherever you go, you hear the voice of complaint. No community is free from it, whether it be the smallest—such as the family circle ; the largest—such as the nation ; or the intermediate clusters of men, in towns, villages, and states. Whoever, therefore, should have the happiness, by his wisdom and benevolence, to devise a perfect *remedy* for the evil, would be justly pronounced the greatest benefactor of mankind. Such a benefactor, I present you, in him who said, through a querulous woman in the village of Bethany, to all her sex, and to all the species, “thou art careful and

troubled about many things ; but one thing is needful." The *remedy* is also before you—Be careful for nothing ; but commit yourself, and your way, unto the Lord ; and peace, sweet peace, such as the world giveth not, shall take possession of your soul. Adopt *his* principles, and follow his example, and your happiness is secured beyond the possibility of invasion. Man is a sinner ; and his sins make him wretched. But "the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." The proof of this, however, is found only in following his directions : for it would be preposterous to suppose, that an *unknown* fountain, is to be approached and tasted, by any other means than keeping in the path which leads to it. The way to happiness, therefore, and to God, is in keeping his commandments. Follow the Lord fully, in his directions, and you will certainly find peace. If God is good, his *laws* are good ; and that is a perverse mind, which complains of unhappiness, while refusing to take the road which leads to it. The ways of wisdom, and these only, are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths, and only her's, are paths of peace. Deny your ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and you shall find no cause of complaint—no gnawing worm at the root of your gourds, and your vines. Let the spirit of the world be supplanted, by adopting the spirit of *this* precept, and then, though prosperity or adversity, life or death, be yours, you shall be found rejoicing in the Lord, and joying in the God of your salvation. And until you arrive at this point of moral elevation, any external condition which has been reached in earth or heaven, would leave you comfortless ; and a descent would remain to you, like that of Satan from the abodes of bliss. And this for the very obvious reason, that pleasure and pain do not result from any state of matter, but from the state of the mind. Wandering of desire, would make an angel wretched ; and fixedness of the heart

on proper objects, has made a thousand martyrs superior to torture. This, then, is the sentiment to be illustrated; and I beg you to take fast hold of it, and never let it go: to keep it, that it may be your life. This is the sentiment of Jesus Christ—That any solicitude of man, which excludes a sense of *dependance* upon God; which implies a want of *submission* to God; which involves the supposition that we are *wiser* than God; or which implies distrust of the *goodness* of God; is self-tormenting, and must bereave the soul of settled tranquillity and peace.

1. First, that solicitude, which excludes a sense of dependence upon God, makes a man his own tormentor. Concerning all things which relate to the present life, whether food or raiment, houses or friends, a good name, or health and freedom, our duty is plain and well defined, and consists in a diligent and faithful use of such means as God has put into our possession. Beyond this, all is without our reach, and beyond our control; and all solicitude and anxiety, other than that of doing our *duty*, is sure to harrass and distress the mind. Why then should a man exercise, or trouble his thoughts, on the subject? It will effect nothing, towards hastening or accomplishing his desire. He can add nothing to his stature, nor make one hair white or black. All his anxiety beyond this, is like that of the child crying for the moon—it makes himself and others much disquietude, but has no tendency or influence, to bring the object of his solicitude into possession. The law of gravitation, and all the other laws of nature, are forever settled in heaven; and they will not cease their operation, nor deviate from their course. Why then, if man seeks enjoyment, should he take the very method which ensures his disquietude? Why does he not do, what he knows to be his duty; and in humble, and thankful dependance upon him who has reserved the event in his own power, feel content that the issue is of God?

The mother who watches over her diseased infant, or sends her darling boy upon the waves, to seek a subsistence for herself and him, may pass her nights in watchings, and her days in fastings and labors, and refuse to be comforted, till they are safely restored to her arms; and in consequence of such determination, vex and distress her soul for months and years. But her solicitude comes too late. The only question which should have excited it, was a question of *duty*; and when this was settled, by the rules of God's word, and done accordingly, nothing more belonged to *her*, but all the rest to God; and what she had no control over, should never have been a subject of anxiety at all. But she will tell me, I was a parent, and how could I help it? But, my friend, God is a parent too; and when you have obeyed him, and committed your way unto the Lord, you must not plead your parental feelings towards your children, for acting as if your heavenly Father was dependent upon *you*, or *you* independent of him.—And if you cannot help tormenting yourself by your sins, neither can you expect God will work a miracle to preserve you from their unavoidable fruits. Are not the feelings of God as worthy to be trusted, and as likely to be proper, towards you and your family, as your own; and had you trusted in him, would you have been confounded, or excessively grieved?

Here is a man brought home, covered with the marks of poverty and disease—inconsolable for the loss of his patrimony; and subject to all the miseries of a gloomy and desponding mind, because he has not succeeded in his enterprise. He said, I will go into such a city for a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain; and return with a competence to my family, and enjoy it with them many years. But did he set out, with a humble sense of his dependance upon God? Did he lay all his plans, under a consciousness of his imbecility and frailty? Did he consult *him*, on whose plea-

sure riches and strength are suspended? And had he followed the rule of his merciful lawgiver, and sought all this, in subordination to the kingdom of God and his righteousness? Not so, for then he would have been prepared for the *event*; and, instead of coming home disconsolate, would have said to his family—God, who is rich in mercy, has defeated my plans: he knows what is best for us: I committed my way, and the event, to him; and I have no wish to take it back. Be not anxious about your life, nor mine. The Lord will provide. He sees it *needful* that we suffer this disappointment, and that we have trouble in the flesh; but it is for *good*. Let us wait the issue, and rejoice in *his* sufficiency. Which of the two, is the happiest state of mind; and to which of the two, does carnal and forbidden anxiety about even a competence, necessarily conduct us?

My hearers! the man who leaves the Almighty out of sight, when he sows his seed, or waits for the rain; and troubles himself about causes, over which his prayers, and diligence, and prudence, can exert no influence, necessarily subjects himself to vexation of heart; and well may he thank God if his seed ever vegetate, or the corn mature, or the crop be gathered in, or he, after all, have power to eat thereof. The vexation is of his own making; and all the good he enjoys of his labour, is the unmerited gift of God.

What think you of the man, who breaks in, by his secular thoughts, upon the consecrated business of the sabbath—who mixes up the distinct concerns of this six days with those of the seventh, which is God's; and who, forgetting his account with God, transfers his devotions from the closet and the sanctuary, to his counting house and his ledger—is he careful for nothing? Has he no unreasonable solicitude, and is not his dependence rather upon his own right hand, than upon God? Does such a man wonder that he is not happy, in his present condition, or future prospects?—Does he

complain that wisdom's ways are unpleasant; or is it strange, that the word of God does not profit him? The cares of this world, as the Master forewarned him, choke the word, and render it unfruitful. It is of no profit, and of no consolation; and he is his own tormentor. And when at the last, remorse stings him like a serpent, he will look back upon his self wrought miseries, and say, how has my heart despised instruction, and hated reproof—therefore has all this evil come upon me. Thus, every kind and degree of solicitude about worldly good, which excludes a due sense of dependance on God, is self tormenting, and drives peace now and forever from the breast. It renders a man's soul, like the turbid and restless sea, whose agitation produces mire and dirt. Would it not have been better to have humbly followed the direction in the text?

2. That solicitude, which implies a want of submission to God, produces the same effect. "I cannot have it so"—is often the decision of the mind, in cases where God has revealed his determination, that so it *shall* be: and the opposition, or dissatisfaction, of the heart, is only kicking against the goad. I say nothing of the abominable impiety of such a mind: I am only showing the unavoidable wretchedness it produces. Here is a man, for example, who plans wisely as the world say, who makes all his arrangements judiciously, to accomplish his plans, and who is defeated in every thing he proposes, or disappointed in all he undertakes. His earthly possessions waste away, his family descend from their accustomed rank in life, to comparative servility: now whatever the means are—whether the hand of men, or the more *direct* hand of God—God has ordered it, and so it must be. But he cannot have it so: his thoughts trouble him: his mind preys upon itself: every thing which reminds him of his former prosperity is a vexation, and his whole soul is continually discomposed. Now let us suppose him to say—

the thing is of the Lord, without whom a sparrow falls not to the ground—His will is done—He gave, and he has taken away; and blessed be his name. Suppose further, that he should *feel* as he says, and *all* he says—what *then*, disturbs his peace? If he have no imprudence, or wickedness, of his own, in *getting*, to reflect upon, what *loss* has he suffered? Nay, what good has he not gained—since we know God makes all things work together for good to them who love him?

Or take, on the contrary, the man who lives all his days, in opposition to the known will of God—only for *himself*, and his present enjoyment: he has all that heart can wish, but he cannot bear to think that he must die, and give an account of himself to God. He has no idea, of being forever shut up in a state of despair, and excluded from the happiness of heaven, because he has been alienated from the life of God. This doctrine, of consequence, whether he affect to believe it or not, is an occasional cause of disquietude; and with all his show of ease, and pleasure, and hilarity, he is a wretched man; his sick and dying bed discloses the fact, to those who had never known it before, and who perhaps, had envied him his happiness. It is impossible he should be *willing* it should be thus, because, as the Apostle said, “no man hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it.” His very *solicitude*, then, however moderate it may seem in regard to worldly enjoyment, is excessive, so long as he prefers it to a life of piety; because, in some essential particulars, it is insubordinate to the purpose which *shall stand*, and to the pleasure, which, in defiance of his wishes, will be done.

In like manner every man, who through the love of this present evil world, or its dearest objects, or the love of himself, cannot submit himself to the doctrines and the providence of God, renders himself wretched; because there is opposition and collision; and as these cannot act upon the

Almighty, to discourage *him* from pursuing his course, they cannot fail to grind, even the heart of stone, which frets itself against the Lord. How excessively careful, then, are men, to render themselves miserable, both here and hereafter, simply for want of a cordial submission to the purposes, and counsels, and providence of Him with whom we have to do!

3. In the third place, that solicitude, which involves the supposition that we are *wiser* than God, fails not, sooner or later, to produce a wretched state of mind. It is an old story, and one derived from the observation of men of all ages, that almost no man is contented with his own condition. He never has *enough*, or what he has, is not of the right kind, or given in the right time, or communicated in the right way, or does not effect the object for which it was sought. I need not offer examples, or illustrations of this truth. I speak only what every child of Adam knows; and testify only what he has seen, and my testimony is from *himself*. Now all this discontent, and dissatisfaction, productive of much injury to society, as well as a painful void, or an overwhelming discomfiture to one's-self, involves the supposition, that, wise as we may admit the great disposer of events to be, he manages our concerns, less wisely than we should do for ourselves, had we only, like him, to speak our will, and have it done. No man can doubt that God governs the world; that both good and evil come of him; and that every man's external condition is allotted him of the Most High; and, that being of more value than many sparrows, God pays a proportionate regard to his destination, and every thing which concerns him in this life. That what he gives, we gather; what he withholds, we look for in vain from any quarter: and therefore, that nothing is to be expected from second causes. Why, then, do we not regulate our desires by his rule, and satisfy ourselves with his dispo-

sal?—Why attempt to rob, or over-reach God?—To make that material object yield us a good which God has not put in its power; or look for an effect, from this or that condition, which he has told us, it is not fitted nor designed to produce? There can no reason be given for it, but either, that we do not regard the counsel, or hand, of God in his operations, and so do not understand his loving-kindness; or, that we think our judgment, at least in our *own* concerns, better than his. Indeed if we do not *always* go to his counsel to make up our judgment, it can be owing only to our self-sufficiency. Is it not manifest, then, since “the foolishness of God is wiser than men,” that any solicitude to carve for ourselves, and, above all, that contumacious and obstinate spirit which decides, that it should be according to *our* minds, is excessive, and productive of mental commotion? Surely, the man who thinks himself wiser than God, must be always a prey to disappointment and humiliation: because, in spite of *his* opinion, the wisdom of God will triumph. Condescending as he is, Jehovah will never yield this point, either in regard to the propriety of his laws, or the fitness of his providence. In the mode of bringing up our children, in the duty of secret, family and public prayer, as well as in the regulation of all the concerns of this life, God has given us the dictates of his wisdom. If we think ourselves possessed of too much understanding to follow his prescriptions, we shall of course adopt methods of our *own* devising; and if, in consequence of so doing, we have an unruly house, or cursed children, and reproach for our negligence, and stings of conscience, and ten thousand other kindred fruits of supposing ourselves wiser than God, we have only to thank our superior wisdom, for its legitimate fruits; and learn, by our wretchedness—what we would not be taught by his precepts—that God’s wisdom is better than our strength—and that all solicitude, other than that,

the object of which is to please him, has yielded nothing better than vanity and vexation of spirit. The sighs, and groans, and self-reproaches which you ever hear ; and which burst forth from your own bosom, when in solitude, are all to be traced to this anxiety about concerns that belonged to God, and not to man. He who has the testimony, that his only anxiety has been to please God, has a soul as unruffled as the bosom of the lake, and one which as brightly reflects the grandeur and beauty of the heavens. The wisdom of God is in him. And for *want* of some testimony like this, you see the wise of this world, with a bosom heaving like the troubled ocean—boisterous and foaming—wave rises above wave, urging on one another, till they are split and swallowed up by some overwhelming billow in pursuit.

Now, in all these things, said the wisdom of God, I would have had you without carefulness, save only, that ye might please the Lord ; and content with the condition he allotted you ; “for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.” Why set the heart upon that which is not ? The world like a pageant passeth away.

4. Finally, all that solicitude in man, which implies distrust of the *goodness* of God, is also self-tormenting ; and bereaves the soul of settled tranquillity and peace. No inconsiderable portion of our wicked world, are influenced in their opinions, and feelings, and conduct, by the maxims and views of the world, rather than of God. The irreligion of thousands has its proximate cause in this influence. They are ashamed of their duty to God, or of being detected in it, because of what *men* will say of them. They are more susceptible to ridicule, than to *truth* : and with less difficulty mount over the law and authority of Jehovah, than the opinion, and patronage, and respect of men. O ! how many a youth, has, on this account, taken the first step in trans-

gression of one or other of the commandments of God, which has broke his way to hardihood in sin! How many a man in mature life, and even in old age, has been reluctant to obey God, and leave the companions of his vices, lest he should incur their odium, and the name of an enthusiast! Now this solicitude to please men, or to avoid suspicion and reproach, implies an impious distrust of God; and so does all anxiety, about what men will think of us, when put in competition with our obligations to the fear of God, and to the pursuit of that honor which cometh from him *only*. But is not every such pusillanimous and base spirit, treasuring up scorpion stings, for its retired and solitary hours; and remorse intolerable, for the day when God shall visit him in anger? Yes, even before that day, this excessive carefulness to please one's-self and the world, rather than to do the will of God, brings with it a miserable state of mind. It makes a man afraid, or ashamed, to look at *himself* in the light of an accountable being; it prevents him from conversing with wise men, and, of course, from becoming wise; and, above all, it renders him contemptible in the eyes of the very men, whose sarcasms, and reproaches, he is so anxious to avoid. They know, he knows, and all men, in their right mind, know, that religion is the one thing needful—They know that it is the height of wisdom, for a man to be ready to meet his God: and equally well, that some preparation is necessary for this end; and that among these preparatory steps, the first is, that of leaving the company of the scorner, the scoffer, the ungodly, and forsaking the way, and the companionship, of evil men. Evil company is laid down in our chart, as one of the dangerous shoals to be avoided. They have heard it said, in all the tenderness of God's paternal love, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." They have heard from the high authority of Jehovah's word, "Thou shalt *not* follow a multitude to do

evil ;” and, over all, “cease to *hear* the instructions which cause thee to err.” But they have no confidence in the goodness of him, who thus warns and counsels them. They question the benevolent intentions of God, in this thing. They have too much solicitude for their *honor*, to believe that God will take care of *that*, as well as of every thing else, however dear, which we commit to his keeping. Indeed, they have no belief, that a *strict* regard to all God’s commands, is necessary to make them honorable and happy. They expect to attain these good things, in defiance of their contrariety of affection, and practice, to his precepts ; and, therefore, hate not every false way. Thus their life is corrupted, and their heart estranged from God. The conscience is robbed of its power to testify in their behalf ; and all the sources of permanent comfort, are turned into springs of bitterness and grief. Is this an imitation of those holy men, inheriting the promises, who rejoiced always in the Lord—who were ready, not to be bound only, but to *die*, for the name of the Lord Jesus—and who, having sold their possessions, or abandoned them at his call, counted all things loss, that they might win Christ ; and themselves infinite gainers by the exchange ? No, hearer ! it is imitating that murderer, who sold his Lord, and his soul, for the pelf and pleasure of men, as wicked, and miserable, as himself. Behold his way, and as you dread his *end*, walk not in it—pass not by it—turn from it, and pass away. Instead of binding our hearts more *closely* to the world, we ought to be every day, letting go our hold upon it, and all that is in it. Instead of keeping the soul, moored in this polluted and infectious haven, we should have long ago embarked, and been far on towards the heavenly shore—our rest—our everlasting home.

But I must say, brethren, and friends ! if I have described any of *your* characters in this discourse, your repentance is

yet to be begun : your hearts are over-charged with the affairs of this life, and the day of the Lord may come on you unawares. All your solicitude, is the offspring of doubt and distrust, and not of faith. It proceeds from the spirit of the world, and not from that which is of God. And now let me ask, have you not been the destroyers of your *own* happiness? Has not God said truly of you, as of other men, “ thou hast destroyed thyself?” You have been careful and troubled, about many things which are but for a moment; but for eternity, O! for eternity, and for God, what solicitude has marked a single year of your protracted life? But beloved! let me remind you, you cannot sow cockle, and reap wheat; and if solicitude in the cares of this life, is really destructive of your happiness here, how infatuated the mind, which hopes to derive from it the peace of God forever. Why, then, continue to cry peace, when God says there is no peace!

But he is a fierce reprovcr, who tells us our miseries, and our sins, without pointing out a remedy, and a more excellent way to the happiness we need. Christ was not a teacher of this austere character. He has made plain the way of our duty, and his language is in your ears—“ Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life.” But what shall we do then? Labour to please God. Let this be your *motive* to diligence, in your worldly callings, to frugality, economy, and making provision for your families. Then, every thing will be in place: you will be seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, as the object of all your solicitude; and your heavenly Father, who knoweth what you have need of, will add all necessary supplies. Your carefulness will never produce these supplies—They are *his* gift after all. I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you be not careful for them, as objects on which your desires and

labors terminate ; but to present your bodies, and your spirits, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. Be not conformed to this world ; but seek to please God, and all these things shall be added. They are just as *sure* to you in this way, as in any other ; and, what is of infinitely more consequence, your happiness, for time and for eternity, is also ensured without any sacrifice, disproportioned to the hope set before you in the gospel. Hear then O earth, earth, earth, hear, trust, and obey, the word of the Lord—*Be careful for nothing : but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God ; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

## SERMON XIII.



CHRISTIAN EXULTATION.

GALATIANS, vi. 14.

*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

“**I** will ascend into the heavens, I will rise above the clouds, I will exalt my throne above the stars, I will be like the Most High.” A noble resolution, my brethren ! had it been made in the name of him, who sitteth on the circle of the heavens, and before whom all the inhabitants of earth are as grasshoppers. But intoxicated with the love of pleasure, and deluded with the popular opinion, that there is no happiness for man but in independence of God, this instinctive vaunting of the carnal mind becomes, at once, the proof of its impiety, and the harbinger of a fall. It is followed, of consequence, with the denunciation of him, who has determined to be sanctified in all them that approach him, and before all creatures to be glorified. It is of such a mind swollen with the conceit of itself, as if there were none beside, that God has said—“Though he climb up to heaven, I

will bring him down ; though he hide in the top of Carmel, my hand shall fetch him thence ; and I will set mine eye upon him for evil and not for good." Pride cast angels down from heaven, and drove man from the joyful presence of his Maker ; and every sinner, while he continues to indulge it, will find it an insurmountable barrier to his enjoyment of God. Through the influence of this vile passion, men have always stumbled at the very threshold of christianity, and rejected the only means of life, because the way to exaltation is by the valley of humiliation. It is the constitution of God, without cheerful submission to which, he will have no man to be saved, that no flesh shall glory in *his* presence. This truth is, by Jesus Christ, laid at the foundation of his system : this truth he lived and died to exhibit, in most striking prominence, for the conviction and profit of man. Jesus Christ humbled himself, before the Father exalted him ; and there is a connection between that humiliation and exaltation, which the world never understood—which even the disciples, attendant on his personal ministry, were slow to comprehend. To the one, therefore, his cross was foolishness and an obstruction ; to the other, for a time, an occasion of useless mortification. But on the development of the great mystery of godliness, and the removal of that vail which covers every self-sufficient, unsubdued heart, the disciples clearly perceived, that "it *became* him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect, through *sufferings*." They saw too, that the moral beauty, and greatness, of their lowly Master, had been obscured, only by the false medium through which they had been looking at his system ; and receiving the kingdom of God as little children, they saw his glory, and were changed into his image, glorying only in the cross.

The language of the text is figurative ; and the figure, be-

ing derived from the crucifix—the most disgraceful, and the most distressing instrument of punishment—denotes self-immolation, from the purest and noblest motives, and for the highest end. The incarnation, labors, and death of Christ, therefore, constituted his cross : taken up for no other end, than the glory of God in the salvation of sinners. In this extended view of it, the Apostle declares the cross of Christ to be the only ground of human exultation : and the truth of this declaration will appear from the following considerations :—It is the only exhibition of true greatness—It furnishes the only perfect model of virtue—It forms the only foundation of man's hope—It presents a harmonious and glowing image of all the perfections of the Deity.

1. In the first place, the cross of Christ exhibits all the greatness of which our nature is capable. Amidst all the degradation, and debasement, of our species, something of a God-like nature has glimmered through the ruins. We see in man, the wreck of a once noble and beautiful fabric. His intellectual superiority, his social nature, his susceptibility to generous impressions, though he indulges a propensity to pervert and abuse them all, furnish an illustrious proof, that God made him upright, but little lower than the angels, and the very image of himself. There cannot be a doubt, that man was once justly styled, the Lord of this lower world. But with all these indications of his former elevation, every age has seen, in the confusion of his mind, the warring of his passions, their collision with those of his fellow-men and with the will of heaven, a demonstration of a fall, such as leaves him nothing of his *own* in which to glory, unless he glory in his shame. While the inventive genius of one distinguished mind, the prowess and enterprize of another, the acuteness and penetration of a third, the fortitude and eloquence, or generosity and heroism, of others, have given to a few, in every nation, the character of greatness ; it has re-

mained evident from the beginning, that no man has possessed *all* these attributes, nor any one of them, at *all times*: so that, after the lapse of four thousand years, not a solitary instance has been furnished, of a character exhibiting through life, all the qualities which constitute true greatness, according to man's own standard. And, to the humiliation of our race, we are compelled to add, that of those *moral* properties, without which, the variety and lustre of man's natural endowments become the measure of his disgrace, all men have been empty. We are bound to regard this distinction: we must insist upon it: for as well might we apply the epithets of excellence and greatness to the *mountain*, as to the *man*, if these consist in embosoming vast and splendid materials, rather than in the wisdom and utility of their application. Until CHRIST appeared, therefore, the world was left to conjecture, rather than to witness, the dignity of which human nature is capable; and to collect from the moral fragments strewed along the path from Eden to Nazareth, evidence of what, by a proper use of his powers, man was, and was destined to be. But behold the Son of God! and tell us what is superfluous, what defective, in *his* character. There is a dignity in his *childhood*, which not only astonishes maternal fondness, but confounds inflated learning—A wisdom, which disarms barbarity of its rudeness, and refinement of its cunning. The apology of the one is, “never man spake like this man”—The other's greatest sagacity, is evinced by silence. After the utmost reach of that sagacity, it is testified, it durst ask him no more questions. It was the glory of Jesus, that the moral qualities of his heart, gave an influence the most commanding, to all the attributes of his mind. Because *that* was unspotted, he was incapable of perverting the powers which made him great. His superiority to the world, gave him an ascendancy over it, and made him *in reality*, what many have *affected* to be, a person

of superior order. It was this moral rectitude, which gave equal worthlessness to the caresses and curses of the crowd, when they would have placed upon his head, first, the crown of Cæsar, and next, the crown of thorns. It was this, which withstood the temptations of the devil in the wilderness, and supported the ignominy of the cross. But for this, he could not have met prejudice and opposition, without impatience and resentment; nor have borne every kind of indignity and sorrow, without repining and despondency. In the midst of the world, Jesus Christ stands alone—the single object deserving unqualified, and unequivocal, admiration; because, *he* is the only subject of uniform magnanimity. Subjected to all our infirmities, and to *more* than all our sufferings, his whole life is without a stain, and its last act, consummated its perfection. Outvying the only luminary at all like him, every part of *his* course was a meridian splendor, exceeded only by his setting rays.

2. Look at the qualities which gave him this pre-eminence; and see, in the second place, how the cross of Christ is the only ground of exultation, as it corrects man's notions of glory, and presents a model of true virtue. The schools of philosophy, the portraits of history, and even the writers of fiction, with all their latitude of conception, and license of imagination, exhibit no character on which the good man dwells with entire complacency. Most men have mistaken the very *nature* of virtue; and even those, who, guided by a prophet's vision, have occasionally exhibited some just traits of her lovely character, have been miserably defective, in the degree, and constancy, of their excellence. All their defects, in notion and example, are corrected and supplied in the model Christ presents us. In this, under all the trials of man, we behold none of his weaknesses—In *him*, we discover all man's native passions, without one of his vices—In *him*, we have a perfect standard, without the necessity of a

contrast to set off its beauty—In him, we have all that properly belongs to *man*, yet nothing inferior to any order of being; because he is perfect in his sphere. Is true greatness best proved by adversity? This criterion is applied to him through life; and through life, cheerful submission to divine precept, and divine appointment, without insensibility, temerity, or despondency, invariably shines. Occasional acts of heroism, and wisdom, and generosity, have indeed marked the sage, the military chieftain, and the savage—acts for which, did virtue consist in outward appearances, and single expressions, they might be awarded immortality. But in Jesus Christ, we behold a constant succession of such acts: less splendid in their exterior, than in their *motive*. He is never surprised, never committed. In all changes, he is self-possessed—In all conflicts, even where he seems overcome, he triumphs. Illustrious for his moderation, when his enemy yields; for his forgiveness, when malignity gains a temporary gratification. Ever exalting, and ennobling human nature, by sacrificing his own, to the good of his neighbour. The very act of coming down to earth, under a full prescience of his sufferings, and to become the victim of sin, himself without guile, exhibits a benevolence, such in extent and kind as human conception had never reached. Never, in the filling up of that plan of propitiation, did he betray a symptom of mind unworthy the grand design; not a wish indicative of regret for the undertaking. In condescension, labor, self-denial, meekness, constancy, tenderness, fidelity, he exceeded the expectations which the seers had excited; and the living character seemed to excel the prophetic predictions. To finish the picture, recollect that those eyes, which as a flame of fire searched through all his motives, and with jealousy scanned every action, could discover no spot in him. He was justified in the spirit, and the Judge both of outward appearance and the heart, pronounced him

without fault. The consciousness of virtue so immaculate, gave him boldness before the throne of his Father, as well as of Pilate, in asserting that he had finished his work, and in claiming the glory due to a perfect *legal* righteousness.

His death corresponded with his life. As he lived *poor*, only to make others rich; so he died in disgrace, to exalt malefactors to glory. Such an end was adapted to such a beginning. Forsaken of his friends—mocked of his enemies—abandoned, for a moment, of his Father—his soul still intent on the single object of its being, breathed out its life in pity and in piety. His life is not forced from him, but *voluntarily* laid down. He bows his sacred head, and, as he dies, exclaims, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”—Though I am unpitied, unprotected, forgive my murderers. Admirers of sublimity in action! Eulogists of human virtue! Heralds of the boasted deliverers of mankind!—Go from this scene to the history of your legislators, your heroes, and your saints, and worship at their shrines: “but God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ”—This crucifies the world to me, and me unto the world. Which of its standards of greatness can I boast, and not debase that nature which the cross adorned?—Which of its models of righteousness can I propose to my imitation, in consciousness of immortality, and with the hope of glory?

3. But, in the third place, we exult only in the cross of Christ, because it lays the only foundation of a sinner’s acceptance with God. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid; which is Jesus Christ.” Pitiably for his ignorance of his obligations, and for the obliquity of his conscience, is the man, who imagines that God sent his Son into the world, merely to be *admired*—to give man an example of virtue, and new motives to practise it; without providing a remedy for his guilt, or a fountain for the puri-

fication of his polluted heart. Man even *innocent* has no claim on *life*: but *guilty*, and *unholy*, he forfeits happiness. On this point, the Law and the Gospel speak one language. The cross of Christ, is divested of its chief glory, by the supposition of man's innocence, of his competence to relieve himself from guilt, or recover himself to virtue. To have died for the *righteous*, was unnecessary. The law was not made for *them*. To have died merely as a martyr to truth, would have been ineffectual, for any other end than the vindication of the truth. God commendeth *his* love towards us, in that Christ died for us while *enemies*. The blood of Abel, on any other supposition, speaks as indifferent a language as *his*. The Mosaic ritual loses its significance, and is not even a *shadow* of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice, if it cleanse not the believer from sin. The hope set before us in the Gospel, is a spider's web, and a snare, if Christ's offering perfect not the sanctified. And what but a phantom, is peace with God, if the curse man's sins invoke, has not been sustained in the person of the crucified? No liberty of access to God, is offered to the sinner, nor encouragement to repentance; nor is any holy fear begotten in the human heart, by a gospel subversive of this doctrine. The flaming sword which guarded the tree of life, had found its scabbard, only in the *transgressor's* heart, had not Jesus stood between, and received its envenomed point; and every conscience, when awakened from its slumbers, yields to a conviction of this truth. Wherewith, then, shall we come before the Lord? Sacrifice thousands of rams, and rivers of oil; or the fruit of the body, for the sin of the soul, and conscience will answer, all these were God's before: such sacrifices make nothing perfect, as pertaining to the conscience. There must be a better hope brought in. Will you find it in your repentances? Have you the assurance of God, that a broken heart is not a despicable offering? 'Tis true—but

where, save in the cross of Christ, was ever found an efficient *motive* to repentance? Derived from any other views than *this* presents, man's repentance is as mercenary and servile, as are his sins. No man cometh to the Father but by *him*. None, but by this Prophet, *knoweth* the Father: nor even by him as a Prophet *merely*; but I, "if I be lifted up, will draw all men to me"—and "they shall look upon him whom they have pierced and mourn." *His* soul is the only efficacious offering for sin. By the knowledge of him who has borne their iniquities, is the end of his sufferings accomplished, and the many transgressors are justified. In staying the wrath of God, the throne of justice is supported, and its exactions answered, only by his obedience unto death. Is this the language of earth only, and an obscured vision? What means that voice, then, from the abodes of the just? What mean those ascriptions of glory to the Lamb, who loved us and washed our filthy garments in his blood? Some sinners are confessedly, before the throne of God—They walk the city of the Great King. But nothing enters *there* which defileth. *Their* righteousness is not the basis of their thrones. Whence then their spotlessness? Has their *repentance* obtained redemption for them, and adoption, and the *inheritance* of sons? No! they have entered into the holiest by *his* blood, who has redeemed them to God; and who is made unto them wisdom, righteousness, and redemption. In *him* they are justified—in his cross, therefore, they glory. The gospel itself, as the ministration of the Spirit, and the power of God, has its efficacy, as well as its origin, in *his* blood. The agency of the Holy Spirit, without which man *will* not seek deliverance, was a gift for which Jesus pledged his life; and it was only when he redeemed that pledge, that the Spirit, in his promised copiousness, came down. Fly then, poor Pagan! to your obscene and bloody rites, and immolate the *body* to redeem the *soul*. Rest, deluded Catholic!

on the intercession of your Virgin, and your canonized Saint, the refining fires of purgatory, or the merit of super-numerary works. And ye, not less deluded Protestants! who would be justified by the *Law*, look, if ye will, to your own rectitude for the crown of life. Face the Judge of men, and claim a seat with him, by virtue of your repentance, love, and obedience. Let the man of this world too, regardless of *every* religious system, exult in his superiority to prejudice; and trust, for future peace, to an undefined, and unchristian mercy. "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"—"In whom I live; and yet not I, but he in me"—In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge—In whom alone, a sinner finds his wealth, his pleasure, his renown, his hope, his righteousness, his all.

4. The cross of Christ alone, in the fourth place, spreads before us, in one harmonious view, the perfections of the Deity. It is possible for man to discover something of the grandeur of God, in the works of his creative power, and skill. In those heavens which he has spread out as a curtain—in this variegated earth, peopled and supported by his bounty. Something of his *moral* nature, is discoverable by the reasoning mind, in the providence which guides and governs all—in the cheerful and genial sun, daily rising on the evil and the good—in the fertilizing rain, descending on the unthankful and the just. His justice now and then breaks out—a foretaste of the sinner's doom, and that of all the nations who forget God—burning *here*, on the cities set forth as an example of eternal vengeance: and *there*, taking a range more entirely corresponding with the universal corruption of man, and deluging the world. But these, and more than these perfections, concentrate and pour in full radiance on the soul, when reflected from the face of Jesus

Christ. Here is more than the beneficence which was sung at the birth of nature—It is the mercy and wisdom of a God, combined to *restore* the beauty of a creation, shrouded in darkness, and defaced, deranged, and cursed, by sin. Here too, in awful glory, is exhibited that love of holiness, which, coming in competition with parental pity, pierces the bosom of an only and beloved Son, to give honor to regal authority. Benevolence and purity, here meet together, and are blended with a prescience, and regard to truth; with pity for the sinner, and support for the majesty of a God, such as no pencil, no *conception* can reach. God is *just*, and cannot let the guilty live—God is *love*, and will not let the sinner die. God is great in counsel, and mighty in work: a device, therefore, and its execution, cannot be wanting, to the great end of illustrating all his attributes, and rescuing his name and government from reproach, and the enemies of his kingdom from bearing that reproach in their own bosom. In the cross of Christ, I see the harmony of the divine attributes, while its mighty sufferer lifts his eye to heaven, and cries—“the reproaches of them that reproached *thee*, be upon me.” ’Tis done—on him they fall; and nature draws over her whole form, the veil of mourning, while her author takes on his innocent head the reproaches which the guilty must otherwise have borne. Terms of reconciliation are put into his hands, and the believing, humbled rebel, lives. “O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God”—How unsearchable the judgment! How unutterable the grace! In a train of redeemed sinners, the sufferer sees the fruit of the agonies for which he endured the cross; and his immortal seed of every nation, and people, and kindred, and tongue, counting all things loss, and renouncing all other boasts for the knowledge of him, bow the knee, and glory only in the Lord. Let

“the poor Indian,” and his mistaken “eulogist of tutor’d mind,”

“See God in *clouds*, and hear him in the *wind*.”

Let the Philosopher content himself to ascend, through the laws of matter, and by force of intellect alone, to nature’s God. This, this only, is eternal life, to know the true God, through the cross of Christ. He only has cause for glorying, who glories in this, that he understandeth that the Lord exercises truth, and loving kindness, and forgiveness in the earth, because in these things he delights. Here alone, in coming to Christ, man, heavy-laden with sin, finds rest unto his soul. And here we might stop, and say without hyperbole, our cup runneth over, did not something more than grateful recollections become a sinner, having such a foundation for triumph in the Lord.

II. But, brethren, if this be *our* boast, we shall evince our attachment to the cross, by those principles and habits of life, which correspond with the figure in the text—We shall prove, by being no more conformed to the world, that we are crucified with Christ. It is indispensable to this, and an essential part of our salvation, that we be “planted in the likeness of Christ’s death.” Superiority to the world, is the appropriate evidence of the crucifixion of those corrupt affections, which live and reign, with unsubdued sway, while the likeness of the first Adam remain. Whoever is dead to sin, is released also from its *guilt*; and, transplanted into another region, he grows up with Christ, in a kingdom not of this world—is nourished by the same root, and bears fruit of the same spiritual and immortal nature. The whole body of sin, like that of Christ, is dead—the old nature has no more dominion over us. Oh! my brethren, the objects of this world can satisfy no other than the man who loves the world. But in that man, said our great Prophet, dwells not the love of the Father. They who crucified the Son of

God, would have cheerfully marched with him to death, had he assumed the purple and the sceptre ; and, instead of conflicting with spiritual wickedness, vaulted into the imperial throne. Far nobler were the objects, Jesus sought for his Father, and for *you*. He came to emancipate the *soul*, from the fetters of ignorance and sin—to free the guilty from their condemnation, and the Father's name from scandal ; by enlightening the understanding, exposing the vanity, and confounding the pride, of man—By establishing new principles of action, subduing the lusts, and correcting the fond expectations of the deceitful heart. He came to change the pursuits, and maxims, and spirit, of the world ; and to lead up the moral wanderer, through the valley of humiliation, to the mansions of glory, in his Father's house. Conformity to his *purposes*, is conformity to his *cross*. The *world* have no such ends to answer. If they could *purchase* an interest in his kingdom, self-denial and mortification to the world, would be too great a price. Yet an interest in this kingdom begins with this figure, and adheres to it, through all the stages of our progress to the consummation of its glory. "He that beareth not his cross, *cannot* be my disciple." Friendship with *both* kingdoms, is an impossibility which God has not required. The hopes of men, therefore, who are resolved to maintain friendship with the world, are utterly extinguished by the doctrine of the cross. As the world can love only its *own*, and christians are not of the world, they are necessarily subjected, like the Master, to the same kind of conflict and suffering. They must sustain its pity, forsake its guilty pursuits and pleasures, and endure its indifference, suspicion and contempt. But for this, *any* man might prove his attachment to the cross. Who, for example, would be scandalized, if he might revenge his own *wrongs*—if he might give scope to the passions which the *world* inflames by its allurements, or provokes by its injustice—if he

might “seek *first*,” any other than “the kingdom of God, and his righteousness”—if, in short, he might glory in his wisdom, or virtue, or pleasures, or riches, or any thing human, and be still a christian? Every mark of discipleship is a contradiction of such desires. It is the prostration of his pride, the restraint of his foolish imagination, the subjugation of every corrupt propensity, which render him the lively image of a meek, forgiving, lowly, submissive, crucified Saviour. The spirit which leads the sinner to make the world, or self, his idol, implies contempt of the cross of Christ. This cross-bearing spirit, (as every man who has tried it knows) is a willingness to suffer for *well-doing*. What kind of martyrs for the testimony of Jesus, would the Apostles have made, had they courted the friendship of the *world*? Had they loved ease, or pleasure?—Had they been unable to bear the “proud man’s contumely,” the libertine’s wit, the moralist’s sneer, the scoffer’s taunts, and the drunkard’s song?—Had they chosen to enjoy the smiles of popular favor, a reputation for *prudence*, and any of the blandishments of human glory, rather than the whispers of a peaceful conscience with tribulation; or with reproach from man, the approbation of God? *Dare* a man of such preferences say, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.” Or, whatever his pretensions, says his *life* so? Let no man talk of christian virtue, who so detracts from his *Master’s* honor, to preserve his *own*—who connives at sin, under the pretext of securing respect for his religion; and who would rather hazard the loss of a soul, than incur the reproach of illiberality, and the retort of the scorner—“heal thyself.” Such an one bears not in his body, the marks of the Lord Jesus, nor is the life of Jesus manifest in him.

2. Next to fellowship in Christ’s sufferings, we are to prove our attachment to the cross, by a marked complacen-

cy in the scheme of man's redemption. I tremble for that soul, which shrinks from the duty of confessing the truth as it is in Jesus. "God manifest in the flesh," is a subject, into whose connexions, design, and influence, the angels, who have no personal interest in it, "desire to look." Where the treasure is, the heart will be. Man is always most conversant, with what he most *loves*. The vine which depends for its support upon the tree, will wind around and cling to it. Delighting in the plan of redemption, it will be the frequent subject of our admiring and grateful contemplation: and our love will disclose, and diffuse itself, by every organ of communication. How did it open the lips, suffuse the eye, and move the limbs, of him, who, that he might win Christ, counted all things loss! How did he delight to abase himself, and magnify his office, just as by these means, God was to be exalted! Paul, though he would not deny his conversion, still esteemed himself, the least of saints; and in view of the grace he had long resisted, insisted upon being counted the chief of sinners. Nay, though not conscious of being surpassed in learning, or gifts, by *any* of them, he was content to be called the *least* of the Apostles—To be the servant of all, and to be ranked by the world, with the offscouring of the earth. Behold this convert from Judaism in the scenes of his public life—or follow him to the places of his retirement, and, prominent in all, you see the Lord of glory. In the market and the synagogue—at tent-making, or in prison—Jesus Christ, and him crucified, is all his theme. Arraigned as a felon, or about to receive the honors of a pagan Deity—mingling with the mob who are sworn to kill him, or seated with the renowned scholars of Athens—in the theatre, or in the boat—tearing himself from his christian friends, or exposed, by the slander of false Apostles, to lose his influence with the church—not *Paul*, but JESUS CHRIST, is the burden of his

story. That *he* may be magnified, in his life and in his death, is the language alike of his actions and his lips. To live, is Christ; and to depart, gain, so he may be with *him*. Whenever he may speak of him, though in chains, he enjoys *freedom*—whenever he may exalt *him*, though it be in the darkness and silence of midnight suffering, there he sings praises (without a note of sadness) to God. But was christianity in *him then*, a different thing, from christianity in any man, *now*? Does the same cause produce opposite effects? Or is complacency in the scheme of redemption in one age, the spring of all that is noble in principle, and generous in action, and any thing that is pitiful, base, and dastardly, in another? Did it make the first christians bold for God, and enterprizing in behalf of his kingdom, and does it make *us* afraid to defend the truth, relating to a brother, or to Christ? No, believe me, that “charity which seeketh not her own,” and which is neither “easily provoked” nor “puffed up,” has changed neither her nature nor her dress. It still gives to every man *his* due, to God exclusively, the glory of man’s salvation. To conquer *self*, and overcome the world, this is still the victory of Faith.

3. A *third* mark of attachment to the cross of Christ, is the public confession of him before men; especially, in the visible commemoration of his death, and a corresponding walk in him. The test he has given us of friendship to him, is the *universal* observance of his precepts and ordinances. What lover of his country, delights not to commemorate her deliverance? who is not refreshed, by the story of the sacrifices and the virtues, through which we inherit our religious and civil rights? Is any such man afraid to profess his attachment to the memory of his ancestors, lest he should prove *unworthy* of them? Must we never weep over the grave of departed worth, lest we should remember and feel our obligations to *love* and imitate it? Is *this* the character

of a *friend*—attached above all things to the cross of Christ? Does such a heart stand aloof, from the memorial of the most stupendous work of God—of a death which atoned for the sins of the world—at which all nature mourned—at the fruits of which, all heaven rejoices? Does *friendship*, and respect, for Christ, prompt a man to turn his back upon the memorial of a deliverer, who has taught us to associate with it, nothing but thoughts of peace and good will to man, with glory to God in our salvation? Who can love a theme, which illustrates all the perfections of his Maker, Redeemer, and Judge, and not hail the day on which he rose, and triumphed over sin, and not come to the table which brings *his* cross, and crown, to our remembrance; and bids us, if we hunger, take freely of the bread of God; if we thirst, for the waters of life, to come and drink without money and without price? Is such thy kindness to thy friends? Oh! who ever exulted in the thought of freedom from sin, and yet was unwilling, for any cause, to partake in the spoils and the triumph offered him by him who has slain this monster? On what sad day, do these sacred symbols return to greet our eyes, and he who *loves* the Saviour say—“but not to *me* return?” Who turns away from this table, merely out of *love* to his dying friend; or because he would have his love *invigorated*, and his humility increased, and his sorrow for sin rendered deeper, and his zeal and gratitude, made to burn with intenser flame? Who excuses himself from this feast, that he may have a more *voluntary*, and happy exile, from all the world, that he may be more abstracted from *himself*, and enjoy more close communion with his Lord? Oh! be cautious, beloved hearer, lest you go away, when Jesus invites you, because you have no *relish* for that cross, which places true glory at a point, beyond the goal of your ambition—Because here sit the fool, and the wayfaring man: and because the *babes* who are here, are not christian

enough, for communion with *you*. Beware lest self-righteousness, instead of a sense of your unworthiness, carry you away. Go if you choose, but remember, it is as easy for him who eateth *not*, as for him who dippeth in the dish with Christ, to lift up the heel against him. *You* see the danger on *one* side only; Christ, when he bids you come, looks on both.

4. Finally, he only evinces his attachment to the cross, and glories in that alone, who, in the great object of his pursuit, co-operates with God to the end for which he gave his Son to death. We therefore, as co-workers with him, beseech you, hearers! that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. But for what end *did* he die? Was it not to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works? you look in vain to Christ, if you lose sight of this. He has meekly borne every other indignity, but he will never consent to this—He will not be made the minister of sin. In vain you turn your eye to Calvary, if you are not changed into the image of the Saviour. The tree which bore our sins, saves no man who has nothing of the benevolence which planted it, nor of the mercy which dropped from it. Its fruit, is for the healing of the wound which sin has made. To that end direct your eye to it, and Christ's death becomes the price, and his resurrection the pledge, of your happy immortality. Unsanctified by that temper of love, which held to the latest breath the spirit of forgiveness, Christ to you is dead in vain. If any man be devoid of *his* spirit, he is none of his. *They* are the men glorying only in his cross, who do his will. They are crucified to the world, and the world unto them—They walk humbly with God. They will be calm, when the last thunders roll: and the voice which pronounces man's final doom, will be to *them* sweet as the harps of the angelic choir. Who would not be crucified for an ETERNITY of such bliss?

## SERMON XIV.



### THE MOUNT OF REFUGE.

GENESIS, xix. 17.

*Escape for thy life—look not behind thee—neither tarry thou in all the plain. Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.*

**T**HE history of Lot, and especially that part of it to which this passage refers, exemplifies the apostolic intimation, that the righteous being scarcely saved, there is no hope for the ungodly and the sinner. His wife, his children, his property, were all destroyed, with every thing pertaining to that wicked city which he had chosen for the place of his residence, and he himself did but escape. He should not have chosen such a city for his residence. The prospect of gain, was but a wretched prospect ; and its fullest acquisition, a miserable compensation for the evils to which he subjected himself, by removing to a place where the ordinances of religion were unknown, and dissipation and iniquity were universal. But besides the certain vexation to which he exposed himself daily, by taking up his abode in such a place,

and indulging in intercourse with such a people ; he put the welfare of his family in jeopardy, and though he himself was saved, they became a prey to the contagion of bad example, and perished with the wicked citizens of Sodom. But righteous men are not always wise, and but for divine grace, their own indiscretions would ruin them.

God having commissioned his angels to destroy the city, (none righteous being found there, save this one man) they entered Lot's house, warned him of his danger, and informed him of the possibility of his seasonable retreat. Believing unhesitatingly the word of the Lord, he went out to communicate the intelligence to his family friends, his children especially, who were settled around him, and urge them to partake, with him, in the benefit of the kind admonition. But being unsuccessful in persuading them of their danger, he lingered to expostulate with them. Perceiving this, the angels laid hold upon him, his wife, and daughters, and urged them violently out of the city ; and having thus far secured them from immediate ruin, thus addressed him—“Escape for thy life—look not behind thee—neither tarry thou in all the plain. Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.”

The obvious analogy between the case just described, and impenitent sinners, will lead us from the history to the doctrine. Was the city in which Lot dwelt, devoted to destruction ?—So are all men under the Law's condemnation. Were Lot and his family, kindly provided a refuge from the impending ruin ?—So are the impenitent under the Gospel. Were the one shown the mount of safety, and urgently entreated to make good their escape to it ?—So are the other. Did the salvation of Lot and his family, depend on their seasonable flight from the city, and the plains, of Sodom ?—So does that of the sinner, on his seasonable flight to Christ, the only refuge from death. The admonition of the text,

then, addressed to Lot, by the angels of God's mercy, may be considered as the voice of God's ambassadors to men, condemned and ready to perish.

1. In the first place, was the city of Sodom, in which Lot dwelt, devoted to destruction?—So are all the transgressors of God's law, while they remain under its condemnation. The whole history of the plan and execution of the work of redemption, presupposes, and is built upon, the fact, that *the soul that sins must die*. The great end of the gift of Christ to the world, was to magnify the law, and redeem them who were under its curse. Why else, if we make our reason the umpire, should such a plan have been originated? Why should the Son of God be manifested—why be holden to perfect obedience to the law—and why suffer its curse? Why should his mediation become necessary to human safety and happiness, on any other supposition, than that our title to life was lost, and our subjection to the law's penalty unquestionable? And if our own reason establishes the conclusion, that by law no man is justified, but all devoted to destruction, much more do the explicit declarations of Christ, and his witnesses, render clear and certain this doctrinal verity. “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, written in the book of the law, to do them”—is the unchangeable, and uniform tenor, of the revelations both of Moses and of Christ. That wickedness, which is explicitly declared by an Apostle, to consist only in the violation of the law, is, with equal explicitness, declared, by Apostles, and Christ himself, to have incurred “the damnation of hell.” Resting in these assurances, Christ appealed to the Pharisees themselves, whether there existed a possibility of escape, since both Jews and Gentiles are confessedly under the law, alike transgressors of it, and therefore, all concluded under sin: so that on this charge, every mouth is stopped, and the whole world is become guilty before God. It has

indeed been said, 'the law was *peculiar* to the Jews as a rule of life.' But the Apostle denies it; and alleges, that every moral agent is alike condemned by it, though to all it has not come in the same form of exhibition. Even the heathen have the substance of it written on their consciences, and so are a law unto themselves: yet neither they, nor the Jews, nor sinners under the gospel, have fulfilled it. They are, of consequence, condemned by it, and devoted to destruction.

Nor is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance. It is a common artifice of the sinful heart to suppose, since Christ died to redeem us from the curse of the law, that his intercession is prevalent for this end, without regard to any change in the *character* of the transgressor. But here both the analogy, and scriptural facts and doctrines, fail to support, or even to render plausible, the conjecture. Abraham interceded for the devoted city; but his intercession failed, in all the extent in which its inhabitants were unrighteous. God would have spared it for fifty, at his request—for thirty—for twenty—for ten—but they were not found. That intercession, like Christ's, was applicable only to the righteous. "I pray for these," said Christ, "I pray not for the world." It would defeat the very end of his mediation, to save the wicked, any further than they are saved from their wickedness. Their state cannot be changed, but by a change of character. His object was to vindicate, not destroy the law—to magnify, not dishonor it. Therefore he is said "to save his people from their *sins*:" otherwise, he would be "the minister of sin." The law would be made void, even in the salvation of the believer, were not faith a purifier of the heart. But God forbid, we should make void the law, says the Apostle, by preaching peace, through Christ, to the believer: on the contrary, we thus establish the law. Beyond all doubt then, every transgressor is as

certainly, before faith, devoted to destruction, as he is under the law's condemnation; and Christ's having borne the curse, can profit him nothing. Other arguments equally unanswerable, are not wanting to confirm this position, but others are not necessary. As to Lot, therefore, in the devoted city, the Angel of mercy cried, "escape for thy life;" so are the ambassadors of Christ instructed to lift up the voice of warning and entreaty, and exhort sinners under the gospel, to "flee from the wrath to come." We obey the instruction; and, until you *practically* hear, proclaim the fact, that the wrath of God abideth on you.

2. Secondly, were Lot and his family kindly provided a mount of refuge from the impending ruin, and entreated to make good their escape to it—so are you. The condemnation of sinners, however just, is not necessarily final, and irremediable. They are prisoners; but they are "prisoners of hope." They are lost; but are not irrecoverably lost. They are sold under sin; but there is a ransom price, and a Redeemer at hand. They are dead; but may live again. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son." "He died the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." And what the mountain was to Lot, Christ Jesus is to all who believe in him. Hid in this mountain of refuge, your eyes shall behold the destruction of the wicked, but the storm which overwhelms them shall not come nigh you. There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus: they are made free from the law of sin and death: sin has no more dominion over them: they are under grace, and the curse of the law cannot reach them: Christ is the interposing shield between its penalty and death, and its force is spent and exhausted on this shield. The believer is hid in him, as in a sanctuary which no enemy can approach—an impregnable fortress, in which sin, and death, and hell combined, can make no breach. "It is God who justifi-

eth," through faith; "who is he that condemneth?" It is Christ who intercedes for the believer, and who ever liveth and prevaieth. "The Lord's name is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe." From this mount you may see, on either hand, the desolating storm which you have avoided, and the heavenly Jerusalem which is to be the everlasting home of the redeemed. Here you may serenely contemplate the dangers, and the death, you have escaped; and triumphantly sing of the mercies of the Lord, which the spirits of the just partake.

Flee then, to this strong hold, prisoners of hope! Lay hold on the good set before you in the gospel. Set your feet on this Rock of ages; and like Lot, you are delivered from the fate of them, who were set forth as an example of the vengeance of eternal fire. Such is the language of God to you; and the words of the Lord are tried words—they are pure, and graven on the rock forever. "He that believeth *shall* be saved." God sent not his Son into the world to condemn it; but this is the Father's will, that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have everlasting life. But remember, there is salvation in none other. No other name is known under heaven, which approaches such an influence. Embrace the Son therefore, lest ye perish from the way, while yet it is open to your feet. We tell you words, by which you and your household may be saved.

3. But, in the third place, as the salvation of Lot and his family, depended on their immediate flight from the city, and the plain, of Sodom; so, also, does your's upon your immediate flight to Christ, as the only refuge from destruction. The sons of Lot mocked, and tarried, and died with the inhabitants. The wife cast but a longing, lingering look behind, and, as a monument of guilt and folly, she stands to this day a beacon to mankind. Hasten

then, sinner! Delay not an hour. A few steps will place you beyond the besom of desolation, and establish your feet on the mount of safety. But they must be *decisive* steps. The angel of God stands pointing you the way; the hand of mercy grasps your arm with earnestness, and draws you away from all your worldly endearments. You would take with you, and even wait for, them who mock, or linger. It may not be. Renounce all; forsake all; deny your very *self*, and follow him. Already the sound of the rushing wind is heard—the heavens are black—the lightnings streak the clouds—the sulphurous flames descend—the city is enveloped in the desolating cloud. Does Lot stop now, to take the substance that he gathered in the iniquitous heap? Did he even think of any thing but life? And had he done so, even *this* should have never been given him for a prey—he could not have escaped. But here, all comparison fails. What was the life, which he left all else to save? A poor, dying life, which was soon, at the longest, to vanish away. Not such, sinner! the life you are exhorted to regard—the life of the *soul*, is in jeopardy with you. Lot might have been buried with the Sodomites, and still have saved his soul: but if *you* escape not during your natural life, your *all* is lost. If, by faith in Jesus Christ, you are not freed from the condemnation of the law, the curse of Jehovah rests upon you forever. “Escape for thy *life*,” has, to *you*, a meaning of far more solemn import, than when it rung upon the startled ear of the stranger on the plains of Sodom. It is *eternal* life—it is the *immortality* brought to light by the gospel, which depends upon your immediate escape from your present moral condition. And will you not fly? Hear the voice of the angel, if tempted for any cause to hesitate—“look not behind thee, neither tarry thou in all the plain. Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.” Ah! here is your danger—you will look back; and look still with

complacency, upon the objects which procured your condemnation—the sinful objects which are but fuel to the devouring flame. Escape from the pollutions which are in the world—the lusts of the flesh—the pleasures of sin. Look not back with delight upon thy farms, and thy merchandize, and the things of this world which thou hast abused—upon thy gains, and thy goods laid up in store. Leave *all*: forsake houses and lands, and wife and children, all that thou hast: yield every thing to the consideration, that *life* is depending—that “now is the accepted time”—and let not even the plea of duty to thy household retard thy steps, lest, while deliberating, thou art lost. You may indeed see no danger, with the mortal eye; but ask not the evidence of the eye, while you have that of the ear. It is the voice of an *angel*, which Lot hears: *you* hear the voice of God. “Be not faithless, but believing:” disobedience is sin; and it is from sin you are to fly—’tis this you are to hate, as death. Think of nothing but what is before thee—the narrow way—the mountain of refuge—the celestial city—and run, so as to obtain. Let your eyes look right onward, and your eyelids straight before you: the mountain is in sight. “Look not behind thee”—thy sympathy may attract thee to the burning city: some old companion may catch thine eye, and the eye affect the heart, and protract thy stay, and you be consumed together. “Look not behind thee”—your resolution may be shaken, when you behold the goodly things you are to leave. “Look not behind thee”—you may forget the object, for which your face is turned toward the mountain. “Look not behind thee”—your cumbrous load of sins may weigh you down, and sink you to despair. “Look not behind thee”—it is distrust of God. “Look not behind thee”—perchance they may be making merry at your precipitate flight, and you be made ashamed, and dissuaded from your purpose. “Look not behind thee”—your

children will catch at the example. Remember the reward of him, who puts his hand to the plough, and looks back—of him who valued not his birthright above his pottage—the fate of him, once washed, who returned to his wallowing in the mire. Resist, even unto blood, in the conflict with your sins; and agonize to reach the appointed place of your retreat. Flee, as if an angel spoke to you—as if the monster Death were in pursuit. It is for thy *life*, remember, the life of the SOUL!

“Neither tarry thou in all the plain.”—A partial escape from your sins is not obedience. You may break off many evil habits, and yet remain upon the open plain. Think not of safety any where, but in the appointed place of refuge. Be not content to avoid the *burden* of the storm. You have gained nothing, till you have gained Christ. You will find neither rest, nor security, any where but in him. “His blood cleanseth from all sin.” It will not suffice, even to approach the line—to be almost over. The almost-christian is in the very suburbs of Sodom, and danger and death are around him. Go ever so far, you are in the kingdom of Satan, till your whole body, and soul, and spirit, have become united to Christ. Satan’s kingdom lies all along the plain. Get thee to the mount: there Christ teaches: there his disciples dwell safely, and free from the fear of evil. Stay not in *all the plain*. Follow the direction fully, or you come short of obedience. Thousands have been slain, just at the entering in of the gate. They have taken conviction for conversion—light for love; and in the sparks of their own kindling, walked on securely, and at the hand of God, laid down in sorrow. No part of Satan’s ground is safe standing. It is ice, but has no solidity. It may bear him, who skims swiftly over it to the rock: it will let him through, who pauses and stands still. Stay not in all the plain. However beautiful its borders, the plants are noxious—the

fruit is death. Pluck not a single flower, however fair its colors: snuff not the fragrance, however grateful to the sense—the very scent is poison. Speed your flight—be spirited—be violent—till you pass the boundary. “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” Since John’s ministry, this kingdom has been so preached, and every man who would make it sure, *presseth* into it. Stay not in all the plain.—This is your only opportunity; and should the storm now burst, which is already near, even this will be lost. O! if it come on you, as it has done on many, though you seek to enter in, you shall not be able. It will be time enough to think of *rest*, when the mountain is gained. The time for action is limited: beyond what you now have, none is at your command, none within your power. “Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.” Speed your flight, sinner! The Angel hastens to his work of destruction: you richly deserve a share in its desolating effects.—Speed your flight. Are you weary? O! it is time to be weary, of trying the patience of an offended God. Of what should you be weary, but of sin? But are you weary; and would you have rest? Flee to Christ, and he will give it you: he has promised it, and you can be at no loss where to find him. Behold the word is nigh thee, even at the door of thy lips—that word of faith which we preach. Say not, who shall ascend up to heaven, to bring Christ down again from above. The mount of refuge is near.—“If thou wilt confess with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus; and believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” And with what, but the heart, would you believe? The understanding? The Devils do this, and tremble; and are Devils still. You do this, without even their emotion, and are sinners still. O! stay not here. This resting place, wearies my God; it produces your sleep; and if this sleep

be not broken, you shall sleep perpetually and not wake, saith the Lord. Stay not then—The consequences are fearful; they are eternal. How terrible to the thought: to endure, how ineffably dreadful! O! stay not a moment, on the plain of impiety: *escape for thy life, lest thou be consumed.*

You see, in this illustration, my hearers! a striking example of the justice, as well as mercy, of God to sinners, as exhibited in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the Apostle expressly declares, that it was designed by God, and recorded, for this very end. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;” while at the same time, a Saviour both from sin and wrath, is provided, in whom they may take refuge. And there is no possible relief, as there is no apology or excuse, for such as fail, for any cause, to avail themselves in time of this provision. The messengers of God, like Angels of mercy, are sent to warn them of their danger, and point out to them the way of escape.—To state to them, that after death is the judgment; when, if they are found without the bounds of Christ’s kingdom, “destruction is inevitable.” Every thing, in this view, which the wicked love, and pursue, is seen to be comparatively worthless, and to be counted as loss. The various pretexts, of duty to our families—of taking care of our temporal interest—of ignorance of the way—of difficulties in our path—are all clearly shown, by this example, to be worthless, and invalid excuses, for any man’s neglecting to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness:” since God has declared this the only possible way of safety, and the course absolutely essential to duty. Like the path of the man-slayer, to the city of refuge, the way of the sinner’s salvation, is made plain. The danger, and the refuge, are inscribed in legible characters, in the books of the law and the gospel: so that he may run and

read ; and he has time enough to escape the avenger of blood, who is in pursuit ; and make sure his entrance into the city of refuge. There he will be welcomed and no avenger can molest him. And, in virtue of the death of the High Priest, he may be one day, certainly, and graciously, restored to the purchased inheritance. The trial will be an impartial, and fair one, for all : but the single question will be, who availed himself of the refuge provided, and who did not ? This question answered, will determine the destiny of every man—of each member of every family—of each inhabitant of every city, whether he dwelt in Sodom or Jerusalem—whether he were the “ son in law ” of the righteous, or the child of Belial. Whoever is then proved to have made Christ his refuge, and to have abode in him—persevering in the fruits of righteousness unto the end—will be openly acknowledged and acquitted : and whoever, under the gospel, has failed to do this, whatever his character, or his expectations, will be cast out as a dry, withered, and useless branch, fit only to be burned. These are the true sayings of God. They are applicable to every one of us without distinction. Their solemn import, both of warning and encouragement, is intelligibly announced to every conscience ; and it remains to be seen, who among us will hear and live ; and who despise and perish !

## SERMON XV.



VINDICTIVE JUSTICE INCOMPATIBLE WITH CHARITY.

ROMANS, xii. 19.

*Dear!y beloved, avenge not yourselves, but give place unto wrath : for it is written—Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.*

**I**N a world like ours, where no man is free from imperfection, and in which most are wholly selfish, there must be great forbearance somewhere. Else, every man's hand will be against his neighbour, and his neighbour's against him. In such circumstances, there could be no social happiness; and the race would be in danger of a speedy extermination. But, where all are probably culpable, in a greater or less degree, whose duty is it to give way? Shall *physical* strength decide the question, and the weaker, in every case, submit to the stronger—the aged and infirm, to the healthy and robust? Such a rule of duty would not only be grossly inequitable, but productive of incessant warfare, to settle the question of superiority.

It becomes, therefore, an obvious duty, to “follow peace with all men”—a duty, the performance of which is essen-

tial to happiness. But perceiving the rooted depravity of the human heart, and that passion, instead of reason, governs the conduct of men; the Governor of the world found it necessary to interpose his authority, and by positive statute, with the most awful sanction annexed, to settle for every individual the question of duty. In that code of laws, which was given, through the Jewish Lawgiver, to mankind, it is written—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And to remove all ground of complaint on the part of the injured, it is added—to me belongeth vengeance and recompense. The feet of transgressors shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste: for the Lord shall judge his people; neither is there any that can deliver out of his hand. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies—I will make my arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh.

In our intercourse with mankind, we hear much said of the importance of *charity*. Yet by many of those who highly commend it, it seems little understood; and, unfortunately for them, they who most rigorously exact it from others, are not the most ready to recommend it by their example. "Be ye not like them: for they say and do not." Hear the inspired description of its fruit.—"Recompense to no man evil for evil. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Avenge not yourselves, but give place unto wrath; for it is written—vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

I shall explain the text; evince the reasonableness of the duty; and apply the subject.

I. Vengeance is the infliction of punishment, on those who have wronged us: or, the will, or wish, to see it inflicted. To avenge ourselves, therefore, is to redress our wrongs

of person, character, liberty, or property, by inflicting merited punishment. But vindictive justice, belongs to God alone : it is incompatible, in man, with charity to his brother man. On this sentiment the exhortation before us is founded ; and not on the supposition, that he who oppresses, slanders, reviles, or defrauds us, does not *deserve* punishment. But the honor of God, and the peace of society, forbid retaliation. The redress of injuries by *private* violence—by returning injury for injury—has no tendency to make the offender better, or to mitigate the evil we have actually suffered. There is not, therefore, a rational motive to vengeance.

But what is it, to “give place unto wrath?” Is it to allow the flame, kindled by the collision of others’ passions with ours, to burn within our own breasts ; provided, it break not forth to another’s consumption ? Nothing can be more absurd. This were to cultivate the corrupt tree, and only to pluck off the blossoms—to cherish the will to revenge, but to restrain the act. To “give place unto wrath,” then, is a phrase, denoting the gentleness which yields to other men’s fury, instead of exciting resistance to the passions of the wicked : or, which opposes them, only with those soft words, which “turn away wrath” ; and to overcome violence, by meekness ; and hatred with love. The very spirit of the law, as given us in the christian precepts ; and the words of the Apostle immediately following the text, confirm this view of his design. To bless those who curse us ; to do good to those who hate us ; is not to add provocation, or fuel, to the flame. Yet this is the mode which divine wisdom has prescribed, to win the souls of the wicked—to evince the superior excellence of the christian temper—and to propagate a religion, productive only of good will to men ; and, if such fruit be desirable, he only takes efficient measures to be wise, and useful, who thus gives place unto wrath.

II. I proceed then, in the second place, to evince the reasonableness of the requisition; and thus to enforce the duty. God is the sole and rightful sovereign of angels and of men. It is his to govern without a counsellor, and without control. Be it remembered, then, that God claims it as his prerogative, to punish sin.—He has proclaimed it as his pleasure, that the transgressor shall *not* receive his deserts, in the present state. The period, and place of retribution, lie beyond the verge of earth and time. It would defeat the wisest and best design of heaven, to change the place of man's trial and probation, into a state of punishment—a place of unmingled justice, and judgment. Is it not perfectly reasonable, then, that man should be required to abstain from every measure, which tends to produce this change? Aside from our obligation, therefore, to love our enemies, there is a sound reason, and a broad foundation, for the prohibition, and the requisition, on which we meditate. The man who justifies by his practice, and vindicates by argument, the custom of retaliation, teaches rebellion against the King of nations. He first, usurps an authority which belongs exclusively to God; and next, employs that usurped authority, to counteract God's purposes of mercy to mankind. He wrests the sword of justice from the hand of his Sovereign, who alone has judgment to wield it; and thrusts it at the miserable victim of his fury, before the time of trial is finished, and the means of reformation, which the grace of God has appointed him, are exhausted. Such is the ground which the Holy Spirit has assumed; and it proves, beyond controversy, that the system of retaliation—that is, of rendering evil for evil—is a high-handed offence against the divine government; that it is absolutely inconsistent with that benevolence to sinners, which God himself exercises, and requires us to imitate; and is opposed, alike, to the law of

nature, and to both tables of the decalogue. The conduct of those who intentionally injure their fellow men, is infinitely more offensive to God, than it can be to *us*; yet he has patience to bear with them who are guilty of it, and to give opportunity for their conviction and reformation, before he punish it. And does it become *man*—himself an offender—to hasten the judgment of God, by the execution of justice on his fellow man? Is it too much, in him who equally needs the compassion and forbearance of God, to prolong his patience, till immaculate Holiness pronounce the sentence, and direct the blow? What an astonishing height, and length, and depth, and breadth of iniquity, is, in this view of the subject, chargeable on him, who, impatient for the day of vengeance, filches the thunderbolt from beneath the throne, and hurls it, unbidden, at a brother in crime! I approach the closet of the disciple of Christ, and overhear, among his petitions, the entreaty—“Lord, let it alone this year also”—“lay not this sin to their charge.” I go into the sanctuary, and witness, in the devout assembly, their strong crying to the God of mercy, for his enemies, to give them “repentance unto life.” I ascend the hill of Zion, and see the angels of God preparing to descend, to minister unto them, who, through the prayers of the devout, are to be the heirs of salvation. I look on the right hand of the throne, and behold the Lamb, by sinners crucified and slain, interceding there, to take away their sins. I return to the familiar scenes of life, expecting some blessed fruits from all these precepts and patterns. But alas! *there*, at the feet of wounded pride, lies the mangled body of the slanderer; and *there*, the seducer is answering, with his life, for the wrongs of an injured sister. Look at this picture, implacable spirit! and think how those within the veil—how God, the Judge of all—regards the feelings of thine heart.

Let us extend our view of the subject. He who once

came to earth, to present in our behalf, a sacrifice and a sin-offering unto God, will soon come again: "his reward with him, and his work before him." That work is to take vengeance on them who know not, or recognize not, God; and obey not his gospel: that recompense, to punish, with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power. Then, "the wicked shall be turned into hell." Then, exact, and perfect justice, shall be measured to every sin, against the law of love to God, and love to men. Then, that slanderer will lift up his eyes, in despair of that mercy which he refused to seek; and he who pursued to the death the seducer, will be found, with him, beyond the reach of a forgiveness which his revengeful soul would not exercise—the smoke of their torment, ascending from the bottomless pit without intermission and without end. Then, the hopeless eye will look around, beneath, above; and having, age after age, wept in vain, will discover not a heart to pity, not an arm to save. The day of vengeance, said Jehovah, was in my heart; now it is come. Now divine justice and mercy, shine unmixed and clear, in all their awfully glorious splendor. "How long"—the humble asked—"how long shall the wicked triumph;" utter hard things, and break in pieces, and afflict thine heritage? "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge the blood of thy servants," which crieth to thee from the ground? The answer was returned—"He will avenge them speedily": he will bring upon them their own iniquity, and cut them off in their wickedness.—"The Lord is not slack, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering." Now his word is verified. His justice blazes with dreadful flame, in recompensing tribulation to them who troubled *you*: his mercy glows with equal brightness, on the heads of his anointed, crowned with uninterrupted rest. Now the asserted claim is made good—Vengeance is the Lord's, and

he alone repays. Now you see every wrong which you referred to him, redressed. Now, before the Eternal, stand the elect avenged. The sins of their enemies, have reached to heaven : they entered the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth ; they are remembered forever. Mystic Babylon is rewarded, as she rewarded you : unto her is doubled according to her works ; and all who refused not, in time, to partake of her sins, partake now forever of her plagues. These have come in one day. She burns with unconsuming fire : for strong and true is the Lord who judgeth her. Now the heavens rejoice over her, by divine command ; and all the holy Apostles, and Prophets : for God hath avenged them on her.

From this rapidly approaching scene, I turn to the hardest heart in this assembly, and ask, in the name of God, is not this enough ? Are you too impatient, to wait the day of God for the award of righteousness ? Does the love of justice constrain you, to anticipate, in this life, the evils coming on the ungodly in the next ? O ! what a heart is that, which would wish a single pang inflicted *here*, on those who are to drink up the full measure of divine indignation *hereafter*. Bleed, O compassionate soul ! in view of such a doom, for him who loveth not his brother. Stay not to ask, if he be stranger, or acquaintance ; friend, or foe. Would you have an agency in fitting men for such a vengeance ? Beware then, dearly beloved ! that you “avenge not yourselves ;” and, by an authoritative example, lead others down to the chambers of death. “Give place, rather, to wrath ;” that, seeing the reality and loveliness of the christian temper, others may count its attainment worth the necessary sacrifice. Heap the fire of love, upon the heads of your enemies : melt their hearts, with coals from the altar of Jehovah Jesus ; and save them, if possible, from everlasting burnings.

Let Devils and savages, continue to maintain the doctrine, that revenge is sweet : truth and goodness, shall find advocates in the disciples of the crucified Lamb. *They* will every where proclaim, in their doctrine and their lives, that though it be human to return evil for evil ; it is God-like, to “ overcome evil with good.”

To submit, without resentment, to injury from men, is necessary, to fulfil the law of love to men, as well as that of piety to God. “ Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” is an unexceptionable, and perfect, rule of human duty ; and, “ whatever ye would that they should do to you, do ye even so to them,” is a paraphrase, the correctness of which, none but the atheist will dispute. Suffer me then to ask, if ever a man of sound mind, did wish, or could rationally desire, the punishment from his *neighbor*, which *his* injurious usage of him has well deserved ? And if not, by what law he takes a liberty, which he disallows to him ? You have trespassed upon your neighbor’s rights ; but deny *his* right to take away yours in turn. You have punished him for defrauding you ; but you deny to him the right to retaliate. You boast of the chastisement you have inflicted on him ; does he rise, in your estimation, by commendation of himself for a like victory, gained by him over conscience and you ? What blindness and partiality are here ! What unbiassed judgment, does not condemn such an operation of the understanding and affections ? Does such a man deserve well of his family, and of the public ? Does such obliquity of will secure the approbation of God ? Answer as he may to serve a purpose, the conscience of every man, declares the custom of retaliation inconsistent with the law of love : for “ love,” says the pen of Jehovah, “ worketh no ill to his neighbor.” If the affections of the heart, correspond with the decisions of the mind, it will be, of consequence, the habitual language of us all—wickedness proceedeth from the wicked, but *my*

hand shall not be upon him : I hate the work of them who turn aside to lies : I abhor their conduct, and the disposition from which it proceeds ; but this lessens not my obligation, to wish that disposition changed ; and to employ the means of divine prescription—expostulation and prayer—for this end ; and to treat them kindly, whether successful or not ; and, having done this, to leave their judgment with him to whom vengeance belongs.

The whole system of retaliation, proceeds from a spirit of insubordination to God, the want of faith in his perfections and government, and a heart, destitute of every benevolent desire for the good of our enemies. Specious and plausible, as may be the arguments of some ingenious advocates of this system, they vanish into thin air, at the touch of the hallowed prohibition—thou shalt not do evil that good may come. It is admitted, that the welfare of society requires the punishment of some trespasses upon our rights, for which the laws make no provision. But shall an unauthorized individual, avenge the wrongs of a *community*, (for his own wrongs, by the very terms, are now out of the question) who have the power in their own hands ? Who has required it at his hands ? That community is not incapable of legislating for itself, which protects each member. Such a procedure, therefore, is an *offence* against society. It is of the very nature of rebellion against the government. It has its origin, in the arrogant, ambitious, and disorganizing spirit of David's son—" O that I were made judge in the land ;" that every injured citizen might bring his suit to me, and I would do him justice. Mistaken zeal, which issues in disgraceful death ; and leaves an affectionate father, to mourn that he had not died in his behalf. The righteous providence of God, in the calamity inflicted for this sin, has left on history, a lesson for man, more impressive than statutes written in ink, or engraved on tables of stone. It is indeed true, and

a deplorable proof of human weakness, and insufficiency, that the laws of civil society, afford but a partial protection to the virtuous ; and an inadequate defence, against the lawless and disobedient. But the law of God, not private interpretations of human reason, is given us, to supply the deficiency. What if ye do well, and still suffer from the injustice of man ! even hereunto were ye called : for Christ also suffered, the just for the unjust, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps. And that no doubt might remain to us, concerning the fruits of genuine benevolence, we are explicitly taught, that thus to suffer without resentment, is acceptable virtue with God. Only the most deplorable blindness in man, could render necessary, so many precepts upon precept, and lines upon line, to render intelligible and plain, the duties arising out of the law of love : and it is only, because there is among mankind so little faith in a future judgment, and its consequences, that the public sentiment is so grossly corrupt on the subject of retaliation. We walk by sight, and not by faith ; or we are not joined with those conspirators against human happiness, who tolerate the practice. For every act of retaliation, is a libel on our heavenly lawgiver—because it is a direct infraction of the statutes of his kingdom. Compare the sentiments and conduct of the men of the world—men of honor—men of spirit—and their rules of action towards offenders—with those of Jesus Christ. Listen to their descriptions of honorable principles—their manly pride—their genuine bravery—their terms of satisfaction for insult, and outrage—their exactions of what is due to their character—and then go to mount Olivet, for the contrast. What is the language of the Preacher there ? “ Blessed are the poor in spirit ”—“ the meek ”—“ the peacemakers ”—the falsely reported for the gospel’s sake. Examine now the spoil of their victories—the blood-stained, and blood-bought insignia of their virtues—

and say if it be possible, that they either fear God or regard man, if they have expected to be judged by the laws of Christ, for their affections to the one, or their treatment of the other.—Say also, from *whose* principles, it is meanness and cowardice to shrink—his, who, from a generous superiority to the wrongs of his fellow men, returns good for evil; or his, who, in contempt of Jehovah's favor, and regardless of his brother's welfare, demands eye for eye, and blood for blood—reckless of the wife's subsistence, and the orphan's tears—to wipe off an aspersion on his character, or avenge an indignity offered to his person, or his dog!\* No, my brethren! in no species of retaliation, from the highest, to the lowest—from that which is accounted honorable, to that which is admitted to be despicable—has the wisdom, or benevolence from above, any share of influence. The moment our actions partake of this holy character, they are honored of God, and virtuous minds, with the name of philanthropy, or public spirit; and cease either to deserve the name, or possess the nature, of revenge; but are identified with the streams of that vivifying river, which proceeds from the throne of God Almighty, and the Lamb. Good will to man, may consist with a desire, that the wicked should suffer under legitimate authority, the due reward of their deeds, when it becomes necessary to the public interest; but can never take a step, in concerting measures to wound them, merely because they have injured *us*. Genuine benevolence is without dissimulation: it is kindly affectioned: it is patient in tribulation: it rejoices with them who rejoice, and weeps with them who weep: it is conciliatory with enemies; and disposed, as far as possible, to live peaceably with all men:

\* In the expression, "his person or his dog," the author may perhaps allude to an *affair of honor*, between Colonel Montgomery and Captain Maenamara; which originated in the *fighting of their dogs*, and terminated in the murder of Colonel Montgomery! An account of this *very honorable transaction* may be found in the Christian Observer for April 1803.

it endures personal affronts, and leaves such as will not be reclaimed, to the judgment of God. *This* is the charity, which surpasses science, and prophecy, and tongues—which shall flourish, while the great globe itself dissolves; and bloom, and bear, and bless, when Faith shall have offered her last sacrifice, and Hope dropped anchor under the walls of the celestial city.

3. The reasonableness of the duty to which the Apostle exhorts us, is evinced, in the last place, by its obvious tendency to promote personal tranquillity, and peace of mind. Men do not ordinarily avenge themselves in cool blood; nor is it always an easy task, to fix upon the *time*, the *place*, the *mode* of redress. The mind in the mean time, like the volcanic mountain before it disgorges its fires, is full of commotion. He who is bent on revenge, plots on his bed the measures by which the slanderer is to atone for his offence, by which the knave is to be made to suffer for his dishonesty, and the ungrateful to be stung in return by his resentment. He sleeps not till he has done the mischief; he has no repose, till he has made his enemy to fall. But the very passions which are thus engaged in conflict, till the purpose is fixed, till the blow is struck, till the foe is debased, are disquieting and tormenting. And who can describe the remorse which he is preparing himself to suffer, when the vengeance is inflicted—when reason and cool reflection resume their throne, and the suggestions of wisdom and prudence take, at too late a period, the place of the dictates of rage? And how often does the disapprobation of the judicious, and the indignation of partizans which follow, embitter still more the remembrance of the deed, and add to his self-inflicted wounds, those of an hundred tongues or pens dipped in gall. Christian benevolence on the contrary, bears, in its fruits, its own reward. It needs not the commendations of the crowd; its own conscious integrity sustains and soothes it. The tes-

timony of a conscience void of offence to God and man, is itself an Atlas—erect under the pressure of a world. “The spirit of a man may *sustain* his infirmity, but a *wounded spirit* who can bear.” Innocence has a refuge at hand, from the abuse of others ; but the recollection of injuries *inflicted*, is, to an ingenuous mind, intolerable. Having his conscience awakened, to execute the duties of his office, he has only added to the reproach of which he sought to disburthen himself ; and, in repairing his imaginary honor, he has undermined the very foundation on which humanity is built : for it is the glory of man to pass by a transgression.

Is he a *christian*, who has thus, by conformity to the world, fallen from his high estate ? How serious is his loss—how aggravated his wo ! He has betrayed his trust ; and in his attempt to approach the throne of grace, meets a repulse, like that of the Sanhedrim’s band, who, at the very sight of the Saviour’s face, “went backward and fell to the ground.” The word of him who is thus sought by prayer, is like a thunderbolt—“whom seek ye ?”—Do ye seek the God of *mercy*—ye who have showed no mercy ? He has no rest in his bones, because of his sin. He has grieved the spirit of love ; and repentance must precede the light of that countenance which only gives health, and which never smiled upon transgression. Does he lisp before God, the desire to be forgiven, *as he* forgives ? His conscience betrays the lie as soon as it is uttered. While thus mocking his maker, darkness and perplexity cover his path ; and his heart, torn and divided with opposing claims, can meet neither a forgiving God, nor an injured brother, without the blush of shame. O ! how much better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud ! Look a moment at his course, and see its end. “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard, and delivered him out of all his troubles.” He has chosen rather to *suffer* for well-doing,

than offend God. He has been injured much, and threatened nothing. He has been reviled, but reviled not again. The archers have shot at him, but his bow abode in its strength, and his hand remained strong : he committed himself, and them, to God who judgeth righteously. He is a man of like passions with others ; he has *felt*, like other men ; a conflict between corruption and his better part ; his spirit was stirred within him, and the fire burned. But he felt himself a debtor to grace : he perceived at a glance the excellence of the law of his God : he saw and admired, its perfect exemplification in his Redeemer. At such a moment, his soul burns to be like him, to honor him, to live and act to the same end, for which he stooped and died. His heart is melted for his enemy ; his soul catches the inspiration breathing from the cross ; he goes to the altar of God with exceeding joy, and “without partiality and without hypocrisy,” cries, “Father forgive.” He has triumphed over corruption : the sun has not gone down upon his wrath : he lies down to rest in sweet serenity, and with gratitude to God who has given him the victory ; and whether he awake in this world or another, with such a temper he awakes, in Christ’s likeness, and is satisfied. What though he be a poor, unnoticed, unbefriended pilgrim, and a stranger in the world ! What though he has no shields, or swords, or scars —no trophies of the victors of this world ! He has the favorable notice of “the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity ;” and in this, a source of gratification greater than the mighty, and in the subjection of his spirit to him, a glory richer fraught with inward and permanent satisfaction, than his who taketh a city. He has achieved a conquest over his sinful propensities ; he has advanced a little in the honors and the field of christian warfare ; and, though there may remain “very much land to be possessed,” by patient continuance in well-doing, he shall come off more than con-

queror at last, and, through him who has loved him, sit down on the throne of perfect self-government, and of his peace there shall be no end. *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves ; but rather, for the joy set before you, give place unto wrath ; for it is written, Vengeance and recompense are the Lord's.* Judge now of yourselves, if to exercise a temper and practice productive of a good so vast, so extensive, so endless, so uncorrupt, be not indeed your reasonable service.\*

III. The APPLICATION of the subject is necessary, in the last place, both to fulfil the promise made at the beginning, and to correct false views of the character of mankind.

If the ground taken in this discourse be correct, it cannot but be obvious that christianity, in principle and in spirit, has as yet made but little progress in the world ; and that the true church of Christ is a very "little flock." The spirit of resentment pervades all the various classes and ranks of men, in our own, and every other nation. We are not, indeed, infallibly taught the actual state and habitual temper of man, by a *single* act of any kind ; but deliberate, avowed retaliation, systematically planned, and perseveringly pursued, warrants us in pronouncing its authors, the children of hell.

It becomes us, therefore, with the utmost impartiality and seriousness, to enquire, of what manner of spirit we ourselves are. We have seen that what "is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God." We have seen

\* In the preceding discourse I have taken it for granted throughout, that all men against whom the vindictive spirit, or the hand of retaliation is raised, are *deserving* of all the injury which the avenger seeks to inflict. But in a great proportion of cases probably, they are not *intentionally* guilty at all ; and in still more, perhaps, their crime is too deeply colored by the pride of self-consequence, and an exasperated mind. How much more irrational then, the meditated or inflicted punishment ? How baseless the fabric, on which the avenger seeks to rear his justification, even on worldly principles ? And if on *these* he cannot be defended, on those of christianity how aggravated before God must his iniquity appear !

that the nobility of heaven, differs essentially from that which monopolizes the claim, and engrosses the honor in this world. We behold the one, sought, envied, courted, at the sacrifice of "that honor which cometh from God." The other, despised and rejected, except by here and there a Moses, refusing to be called the Prince's heir, and preferring the reproach of Christ to the bubble reputation. The one, is arrayed in silken or golden decorations, covered with a drapery after the fashion of this world which passeth away; the other, is beautiful and lovely, only to the eye of faith; and lives only on things invisible, but lives forever.

Beloved hearer! is your *heart*, as well as judgment, on the side of God, or of the world? Do you burn with the fires of revenge, or with the fire of love? Do you secretly contrive, or even wish, to retaliate every injury; to see your oppressor, or the assassin of your reputation, fall? Or does your closet witness, does your conscience testify, does your Law-giver and Judge, perceive in your bosoms, the love to your friend which seeks his repentance; the good will to your enemy which forgives his trespasses, and leaves his name and person inviolate, and his judgment and recompense with his God?

Does ingratitude provoke your resentment, or your pity? Does the recollection of the injuries you have suffered from men, excite the vindictive wish that they may be punished, or the holy desire that they may be reformed? Are there recorded against your names, in the registry of heaven, any deeds of kindness towards the adversaries of your enjoyment, who have sought to filch from you the earnings of uprightness? Among the tears of christian regret, which have been shed over hard-hearted and cruel Jerusalem—tears which angels gather up and preserve, and which God himself accounts too precious to be lost—is there one, which can identify you as a member of *his* body who

wept over that devoted city? God knoweth. The *secrets* of our hearts are with him, and he will judge us, according to our works. The day of his redeemed makes haste, the hour of separation approaches; and who—who among *us*—for the momentary, the paltry gratifications of a malicious heart, will forego the transports of the man, who, in that hour, shall find himself on Christ's right hand! For, as God is true, *he* shall never taste that joy, who hateth his brother in his heart.

Will you reason with me, implacable man! and tell me you have sought shelter in that faith by which the *ungodly* are justified? But you show me your faith, without the *works* which faith produces.—“The Devils also believe and tremble.” Your faith is dead at the root. Do you insist upon a *free* salvation? God forbid a sinner should look for any other: but remember you are saved, neither freely, nor *at all*, unless you are saved *from* sin. “If any man have not the spirit of Christ,” he is not owned of Christ; and his was not a spirit, which prompted him either to disobedience to God, or cruel suspicion and retaliation towards men.

Brethren! the springs of human action lie deep. In searching for them, stop not at throwing off the surface. Dig deep, or they will escape your observation: analyze them carefully when found. There is a healing quality, in those waters which flow from the life-giving spirit of JESUS CHRIST. The waters which he gives are a living spring; they are running waters; they fructify the moral fields through which they flow; they issue in eternal life. Mistake not their nature: such mistake in *this* life, will prove fatal in that which is to come. Destitute of the essential property to which we have adverted, it will be too late to seek to supply it when arrived there. It may now be had: its infusion will render the very waters of Mara sweet. Do you thirst for it? I hear the well known voice of Saul's deliverer reply—In the

midst of men, breathing out threatening and slaughter against even the righteous, it responds—"If any man thirst, let him come unto *me*, and drink." It is the voice, malicious man! of Jesus, whom thou persecutest: for inasmuch as ye do it to the least of his disciples, ye do it unto him. O! for an effect on every heart, like that produced on the carnal zealot of Tarsus! Let it arrest every implacable spirit, and produce anew, the humble enquiry, "Lord, what would'st thou have me to do?"

## SERMON XVI.



THE GUILT AND DANGER OF SCANDALIZING SOULS.

LUKE, xvii. 1. 2.

*Then said he unto the disciples, it is impossible but that offences will come : but wo unto him by whom they come ! It were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.*

**W**HEN Jesus Christ forewarned his disciples of his cruel sufferings and disgraceful death, Peter, under the influence of an incautious zeal, and disappointed tenderness, said “ this shall not be unto thee”—tempting the Saviour to shun that cross, which is the power and wisdom of God unto salvation. And this, hearer ! is the sin, against which you are so pathetically, and terribly admonished in the text. And though there are three classes of men on whom this wo pre-eminently rests, we shall not venture to restrict its application to the persecutors of christians, and the scandalous and hypocritical professor. It belongs to every man, who,

through defect of principle, renders the cross of Christ a stumbling block and an offence, to those for whom he died. To the aggravated character of this sin, our Lord has not failed to give his testimony, by shewing that it is diabolical in its nature, and therefore, like the punishment of it in Devils, dreadful in its consequences. No sooner did he perceive the nature of Peter's advice, as opposing the plan of God for our salvation, than his indignation burst forth upon the presumptuous adviser, in the most tremendous reproof which ever fell upon him from those benignant lips. "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence to me; for thou savourest not the things which be of God." He is indeed the adversary of God and man, who, by the tendency of his counsel or example, persuades his neighbor to spare himself a cross for Christ's sake and the gospel's. His suggestions imply, not only a criminal defect of principle, but an unholy origin. They strike at the very foundation of religion, and therefore involve the deepest criminality. You perceive then, that what in the text is called an offence, is not merely a trespass—a wound given to a man's sensibility or honor—but a stab to his religion. It is the becoming a snare to his soul—a doing somewhat to lead him to avoid the cross, to depart from righteousness, to deny Christ. It is a scandalizing the disciple to his fall—a betraying him into some error doctrinal, experimental, or practical, of ruinous tendency. In the words of an Apostle, it is *any thing by which thy brother is stumbled or made weak*. And you will observe that this a sin, in which a man may become a partaker, by heedlessness and ignorance, as well as by premeditation and contempt of religion. For the statutes of God bind us to edify, and promote the salvation of our neighbour: whereas, by unholy counsel, and a wicked example, we become the occasion of his vices and his perdition

Pursuing the order of the text, I shall show you, first, that there is a necessity for this, and whence it comes :

Secondly, that it is a *great* sin, and deserves reprobation :

Thirdly, that it is a *common* sin, and that our danger from this source requires great circumspection.

I. First then, the necessity of scandal, and whence it arises : for said he who knew, “it must needs *be* that scandals come”—it is impossible but that they should come. The necessity of sinning, is a moral necessity only ; and the offence caused, is likewise of a moral nature. It arises, of consequence, from the contrariety of our inclination to holiness ; from the alienation of the heart from God ; and the opposition of man’s wishes to the law of benevolence. If I thrust my hand into a flame to disable me from labor, it is as necessarily burned, as if it had been done by force. The action is voluntary, and therefore criminal : the physical arises from the moral necessity. It is as unavoidable that an enemy of God should hate the gospel, as that a nauseated stomach should loathe and reject wholesome food. The carnal mind is prejudiced against the truth : this is its condemnation : it is the grand reason why it prefers darkness to light. It is also, undiscerning of moral fitness ; and for this, the cross is either a stumbling block or foolishness. But what we dislike and oppose ourselves, we naturally desire others to dislike also. Our ignorance and prejudice, if they operate beyond our own bosoms, must operate to scandalize our fellow men. Acting with consistency, our self-love leads us to do for others, so far as they make part of ourselves, whatever it has done for us. If our sin, therefore, necessarily lead us to blind our own minds, and harden our own hearts, it must lead to the same effect, on all whose opinions and conduct are controlled by our counsel and example. Just as necessarily then as sin does mischief to our own souls, it tends to make havoc of other men’s ; and if any sinful ac-

tion of ours make our brother to offend, then is it necessary (we continuing to sin) that he should be scandalized ; or that an occasion of his sinning be found in us. Considering then, the natural opposition of the heart to the peculiarities of the christian religion, it is impossible but that offences should come. God, we are aware, has a rein upon the propensities of the evil heart, and restrains them in a *degree*, that the world should be preserved from entire desolation ; that the church should not be disbanded ; that the human race should not become extinct. But it is not his pleasure to restrain human device and purpose in such degree, as to prevent an exhibition of our affections, or of the tendency of our volitions : and until this be done, the world will unavoidably allure and entice those around them to sin. They must, of necessity, take part *with* Christ, or *against* him ; and offer tribute to his kingdom, or scandalize its members to his dishonor. Occasions of stumbling, then, must ever exist, until all the people of the world become righteous, and the blessedness of them who are not offended in him, be strictly universal.

The same necessity that laid upon Cain to slay his brother ; upon the Jews to crucify the Son of God ; upon the Roman Emperors, and all persecutors, to promote christian martyrdom, now exists for the scandal of the cross, and renders certain and inevitable the offences predicted ; and equally necessary, does the love of God to his people and to justice, render the execution of the threatened wo. It is of this moral necessity the Saviour speaks, when he says, “the world *will* love its own ;” and “no man can serve two masters,” but “will hold to the one and despise the other.” Whoever hates christianity, must hate christian influence, and counteract its effects on himself and others, in all the extent in which it is odious to him. Saul while an unbeliever, sought to *overthrow* the faith, and as necessarily to establish

it after his conversion. Men of corrupt minds withstood Moses, became seducers, and laid snares for Israel's ruin. The sorcerer, in like manner, laboured to turn away the Proconsul from the faith, by perverting the word of God. Scandals then are necessary, just so far as a wicked man acts without restraint in the feelings and wishes of his heart ; and this constrained the Apostle to express a fear to one of the churches, that as the serpent beguiled Eve, false teachers should beguile its members of their christian simplicity. Is any man's ear turned from the truth unto fables—his example becomes a snare to those who witness it. Were there within the bounds of the church, unruly and vain talkers—they necessarily withstood the wholesome words of the Apostle ; and if the one established, the others subverted the truth. As among the ancients, said Peter, there were false prophets, so shall there be among you—teachers denying the Lord who bought them, bringing in damnable heresies, and on themselves destruction ; and many shall follow their evil ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be vilified. The nature of this necessity then must be obvious ; since (as the preceding examples shew) from that constitution of God by which every seed produces its own kind, every fountain sends forth streams of the self-same quality. It is not the necessity of the fatalist—implying involuntary effects from involuntary causes—but the impossibility of a free agent's willing contradictions ; and extends alike to the creature and to God.

II. Having shown the nature of scandal, and whence it comes, I am to evince, in the second place, how great is the sin, and how dreadful its deserts. He who takes away my life, only puts an end to my doing this generation good or harm ; but he who corrupts my religious principles, poisons the morals of the generation, and makes me a murderer of souls. Nor does it affect the reality of this truth, that this

sin has many shapes. We may prejudice the soul against the gospel and its author as we will, but whether it be by raillery or terror, wit or sophistry, by inculcating falsehood or concealing essential truths, by persecution or flattery, by counsel or example, by teaching corrupt doctrines, or drawing pernicious inferences from premises which are true, the effect is the same—a soul is murdered—and if the destruction of the life of the body deserves indignation, and proves the murderer destitute of religious life, what can be a retribution for him who betrays a soul to death—who, by poisoning the principles of his holiness of life, procures his immortal loss ! Only the eternal God can *save* a soul, but any *fool* can *destroy* one ; and especially, if he have a fool for his disciple. And who that loves iniquity, deserves a better name, or possesses a worthier character ? If the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, irreverence for religion is the exaltation of folly. But worthless as he is, and insignificant as he may be, and inefficacious as shall be his attempts at mischief, yet God accounts him a murderer, and one too of no ordinary kind, inasmuch as the blood of his fellow sinner first, and next that of Jesus Christ, shall be required at his hand. Wo to that man then, by whom the scandal cometh. Better far, never to have been, better an untimely birth, or an untimely and violent death.

First, the blood of his brother's soul, in the way of whose salvation he laid the stumbling block, shall be required of him. For be the consequences what they may, God judges of actions by their nature and tendency, and these are such in the case before us, as are eminently calculated to destroy the soul, by diverting it from the pathway of life : and if this effect do not follow, the thanks are due, not to him who tempts his neighbor, nor to the neighbor who is tempted, but to God, whose interposition alone prevented the calamity. I know it will be said that sin and guilt are personal things,

and that no man can answer for another's iniquity. I admit it, and yet one man may be the *criminal occasion* of another's ruin. If not, why at the hand of the false Prophet, should God require the blood of the unwarned? Think then of the enormity of the crime we contemplate—How literally diabolical, how easily committed, how serious its consequences! Think of the insinuating child who seduces his parents, the parent who leads his children, the husband who inclines his wife, and the individual who influences his friend, to venture on the fruit forbidden of God.—How malignant that heart, how grievous and interminable the fruit of that malignity! How poor the wretched deceiver, how pitiable the deluded sufferer! The former leads an immortal spirit into sin, and sin leads down its victim to the chambers of death. O! to be the death of a soul destined to exist forever—how revolting to humanity, as well as religion, the thought! Measure the duration of that soul. You have no measure for ETERNITY! Weigh the value of that soul's salvation.—But what standard weight have you for the trial, when Christ, and heaven, and all that God has done for it, are in the opposite scale? When you shall have comprehended the preciousness of Christ and heavenly joys, you will have found the counterpoise. But observe, what I have said of one soul, is applicable to every other, of whatever place, name, station or family. It is infinite good you take away, or infinite evil you procure for him. Mark the intimation of his Saviour—“one of those *little ones*.” You have not caused a Newton, or a Horsely to fall; you have not access to the dwellings of the great, or influence over the mighty and the noble; you are too insignificant, perhaps, to persuade them to be of your opinion, or to follow your example. But over the members of your own association, the young, or some stranger who is ignorantly led by the first man he meets, and who is glad to find a friend un-

der any disguise—over those, you have some influence to their undoing. And it is a fearful thought, that it is *a soul for whom Christ died*, that you corrupt by your false maxims, or blasphemous, or irreligious life; and therefore your sin is nothing the less, because it is not a princely family you make to weep over his bier. No matter how little you are, in the sight of men or God, provided you have mischievous consequence enough to beguile one unstable soul, and teach him to avoid or contemn the cross of Christ: for this is the grand instrument of perdition or salvation to us all. Be you, or he who is duped by you, never so mean, and vile, and worthless, God has a claim on you both, of indescribable magnitude; and both are capable of answering that claim, and of perishing for refusing practically to acknowledge it. Both are his offspring; for both a plenteous redemption price has been offered; and what is not precious in his sight, which has been so valued of him, whom you account still meaner than yourself? Take your judgment of its spirit's worth from the character of its offered Saviour, and say if it were not better to have been drowned in the depth of the sea, than to have filched it from his crown.

I said it was a *diabolical* sin.—And who did Jesus Christ declare to have been such a murderer from the beginning? Who entered Paradise for no other purpose than to deceive the woman? Who has ever since been alluring ambitious men, by the prospect of being as Gods, to deny God; and thrown in the way of their conversion the most insuperable obstacles, by withdrawing their minds from the most painful but necessary truths? And what individual whose character Christ has traced in the text, does not the same thing? Does not every such man minister to his neighbour's vanity, pamper his lusts, add fuel to his passions, impose on his credulity, soothe his guilty conscience, and by practising upon his imagination and his senses, lead him into the haunts and

the strong holds of vice, under the name of a friend to innocent pastime, and rational gratification? But whatever diverts the mind from knowledge, truth and duty, obstructs man's salvation; and in thus diverting the mind, under the pretext of promoting its happiness, you use the same deception with the murderer of Eden, and by lies make *him* to transgress, who, by means of the truth, might have escaped the snare: and such truth the law of love bound you to render familiar, and as far as possible, attractive and pleasant to his soul. Now if he who *winneth* souls is wise, what is the converse? And if he who converts a sinner from the error of his ways, saves from death, is not that man lost to every thing of the nature of charity, who not only withdraws from such a sinner the best means of salvation, but allures him to the very dungeon of sin? He who thus hateth his brother is a murderer; and the charity which rejoices in his success, is the charity of a murderer. What then is the aggravation of this sin? It neglects the first effort of love, and going over to the opposite ranks, with diabolical malignity, persuades a man to turn out of the narrow way into the ranks of death. Is there "joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," and no indignation on earth in view of an agency which suffers not itself to go in, and hinders them who would enter? Shall he who turns many to righteousness, shine (for this honored instrumentality) as the stars of yonder firmament forever—and is not the blackness of darkness reserved for him, who would turn even the upright from his righteousness?

But we shall not arrive at just views of the enormity of this sin, till we consider, that he who commits it, is virtually the betrayer and crucifier of Christ, as well as of his fellow-sinner. Why is the Jew to this day, held to have pierced the Son of God, but because he labours to defeat the end of the christian redemption? And what is there in the sin of

a son of Abraham, which is transmuted into a virtue the moment it enters the heart of a christian? Neither the one nor the other, we agree, can *actually* frustrate the purpose of God; yet both may do it *intentionally*: both therefore are charged with the consequences of having done it actually. Say then, for what Christ was put to death by Jews and Romans, and you have on your lips the proof, that he who scandalizes one of the least of his disciples, crucifies the Son of God afresh, and gives him up to shame. He acts over the tragic impiety of charging him with imposture, and incurs the same guilt. His actions bespeak the same feelings towards him and his religion. Besides, it is his own maxim, that what is done to one of these little ones, is done to *him*. The ruin of man is no trivial affair; yet it is nothing, compared with the reflection on the Redeemer which is involved in procuring it. It is virtually repeating the blasphemy, that he was judicially stricken—that his sufferings were not vicarious—or that they were unavailing to the end proposed. It is taking the well-earned spoil out of his hand—the captive from the train of his deliverer. And if all his disciples were scandalized, when Judas betrayed him into the hands of his enemies, although to *them* the consequences were not fatal, then, though the modern disciple be not finally lost, the same wo falls on him through whom a similar scandal cometh: and to deceive, discourage, or prejudice him against his Redeemer, is to be guilty of the same crime for which his murderers have been a hissing, and a proverb, and a curse unto this day.

And is any revealed penalty too heavy for him, who, in view of a present gratification, or even an eternal triumph, can hold up to derision, in the person of his disciple, the Lord of glory? To wound a brother's conscience, remember, is to sin against Christ. Surely the plague of one's own heart is enough, without any of our helps, to make his

cross a stumbling block to them who perish ; and it needs all our wisdom, and charity, and self-denial, and cheerful and patient labour, and *more* than all, to cause its offence to cease. How inglorious, then, the persevering effort, to render it an insurmountable barrier to our neighbour's salvation ! And if he dies without mercy who persuades men to revolt from Moses, of how much sorer punishment should he be thought worthy, who teaches men to trample on the blood of the Son of God, or count it a common and ineffectual thing !

III. And yet, in the last place, it is so *common* a sin, that our danger of falling into it, requires an admonition to holy and constant circumspection. No man, I am aware, commences his career in life with the specific purpose of prejudicing christianity, or ruining the hopes of its disciples. No woman deliberately forms a design of leading her guests into the depths of hell. But many a man, and many a woman, has been the occasion of this transcendant sin ; and whoever shall find at last, that such have been the direct and necessary tendency and effect of their conversation and conduct, will hear their protestations of innocence, opposed by the cries of all, who, through their pernicious influence, have died in their iniquity. Those souls will testify, as did the blood of Abel against his brother, that this man, and that woman were their murderers. It was because you never discountenanced my destructive habits, but encouraged me by your example, that I continued in fatal error, and lost my soul. It was because you sought to *please*, and not to profit me ; because you, whom I looked to as a guide, corrupted instead of labouring to purify me. You pronounced innocent, those opinions which led me to relax my efforts—those amusements which entranced, and those employments which led me imperceptibly from my devotion to God, and brought me finally to shame. You taught me to

treat strict conformity to christian precept as superstition, and hatred to popular errors as a prejudice of education. You prevailed over my scruples of conscience, and learned me effectually to deny the God that is above. You taught me the inefficacy of *good works*, seeing a man is justified only by faith; and left me indifferent to the reality and nature of my *faith*, because good men differed in their views of christian doctrine. Thus will lost souls criminate their leaders and accomplices in sin, and many will first learn the extent of their mischievous influence in prejudicing each other against the gospel, in those mutual criminations. But if these things, treated now with much indifference, actually become an occasion of men's perdition, and of an irretrievable mistake to those who walk by each other's side, then to one another men will owe their destruction.

What is there more forcible than right words? Yet when you have seen your neighbour fattening like the ox for the slaughter, you have not afforded him even your advice; and he has inferred from your silence, that you, reputed a virtuous man, must have thought him in the way to heaven. Thus by the scandals of omission and neglect, as well as those of profane counsel and wicked example, thousands are led on in a course of iniquity, till it is too late to undeceive them. And it is because the ruin is so gradual and imperceptible, that we do not shudder at the thought of its commonness, or perhaps never think at all either of sharing in the sin, or partaking of its plagues. How few are there, who seem aware, that it is not enough that we do not ourselves fall into gross sins, but that we are required also to save others from them, with fear plucking them out of the fire; and above all, that we do not by any means *cause* them to err!

But who are they, thus in danger—thus needing a caution to greater circumspection? Who are they, thus em-

barked with the great adversary in plunging men into destruction and perdition? Lead me to that father, who, by his prayerless and ungodly life, teaches his children to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, that I may seasonably say to him—"thou art the man." Lead me to that mother, who turns over her children to a hireling, for all their instruction in the duties of religion, that she may indulge herself in the pleasures of the world, that without any false complaisance, I may say to her—it is you, madam, dead while you live, who are to hear one day, in the bitterness of your soul, that the wo was meant for you. It is you, servant of Mammon! who say to all around you in your haste to be rich; that the Son of God mistook the one thing needful. It is you, foolish talker, and jester at the mysteries of the cross, corrupting the unwary by your boast of a better, a more enlightened christianity. It is you, wise man, disputer of this world, who, contemning the sensibility of an awakened conscience, teach it to put away the fears of hell, and the threats of God, as childish weakness; and the thoughts of eternity, as unsuited to the gaiety of youth, and learn your victim to "make a mock at sin." It is you, opposer of the work of the Holy Spirit, who, by an affected morality destructive of all the principles of the gospel, sacrifice the soul to the spirit of pride, and the spirit of the world. Above all, it is you, minister of Jesus Christ, who lower down the standard of religion and morals, by keeping out of sight and out of mind, the spirit of truth as opposed to the spirit of error; and who, instead of being the savour and the light of society, are the very patron and apology of its tastelessness and darkness. And thus it happens, that in a world lying in wickedness, they who are most sacredly bound to become its guides and reformers, are but blind leaders of the blind.

Be not surprised then, christians! that our Lord has admonished his professed disciples, and even his ministers,

thus. Be astonished rather, the sin being thus common and thus great, that you are so incautious in the advice you give, and so insensible of your neglect in that you fail to give; so little watchful over your tongue, your manners, your morals, your doctrines, your very air and temper, in the most ordinary, as well as sacred business of life. Beware lest you corrupt and lead astray, a community of which you should be the reformation and the hope. Take heed, lest by the character of your intercourse with men, you subvert the foundations of their religious welfare, and alienate them still more from Christ, by leaving them to suppose that his yoke is painful to you, and his burden intolerable. Let them never derive, from the premises given them in your *professions*, a conclusion not found in your *example*. Constrain them to acknowledge, that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace. It is indeed impossible but that offences come, but if you have any respect to that charity which Jesus Christ exemplified in behalf of the world, let not these scandals be found, either in your wanton transgressions, or heedless neglects. Put it not in the power of him who watches for your haltings, and who would feed upon your sin-offering, as the hunger-bitten upon any food, to plead the want of one christian example—to stumble over *yours* into perdition, by his discovery of an entire contrast, between the rule of your devotedness and the tenor of your life. Excite in others no doubts, and let them never avail themselves of any hope of impunity, by such a worldliness, or suspicious morality in you, as seems to say—we have but one lot, we go together to the same place; for the effects of our faith, and their unbelief, have a common and undistinguishable character.

It is not indeed to be expected that the world will be just, either to Christ or to his followers; but so much the more

ready as they are to upbraid, and to find apologies for their sins, in the lives of christians, so much the more important to their salvation is it, that their reproaches be made to recoil upon themselves; and for this, that you so serve God in all things, as to have an approving witness in their consciences:—that, as the sons of God, you be blameless and harmless, without desert of rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. It is not to answer the unreasonable demands of a capricious and contradictory mind, that you are called of God. An angel could not do this. Jesus Christ himself, with all his purity and perfectness, could not do it. It is only to let your conversation and deportment be such as becometh the gospel; that they may derive from them no countenance for their excess of passion, their selfishness, their ambition, their sensuality, their love to a world whose fashion passes away. The more we discover in the wicked of a propensity to criminate us, to observe and take advantage of our frailties, and failings, and blunder over them into self-destruction, the more does charity require us to guard against giving them occasion against themselves, and the character of our religion; and the more is the real disciple constrained, for their good and God's glory, to shun "even the appearance of evil." Thus do we give, and most unostentatiously too, the highest and most effective expression of our love to souls, and of him who bled for their redemption from all iniquity, and to purify them unto himself.

Let us associate as many as we can with us, in our pilgrimage to the better country, and *dissociate* as many as we can influence, from the larger company who are thronging the way to death. And if it be vile to propagate a purer religion than may content the mass of mankind, and to proselyte, from among every denomination unto Christ, a peculiar people, let us be more vile; and let us not be ashamed to

let any man see, what is the hope or business of our calling. And to press upon you, beloved christians! the subject of your duty and your danger, by the most awful example, remember that Peter himself—the man on whose noble confession the Saviour promised to build his church—even this man, once fell into this sin; and if *he*, for want of such circumspection could not stand, who of *us* needs not to take heed lest he fall. And a christian, you will recollect, seldom falls alone; and though his lapse should be followed with repentance, yet the many who will imitate his defection, will never imitate his repentance.

I make but another remark, on a subject which might profitably fill a volume with pertinent and important reflections:—and it respects the vast responsibility attaching to men of influence in every department of society—to those men, of every community, who have, I had almost said, the virtue and the souls of men within their power—who stand at helm, and move the ship's crew whithersoever they please. What leader in fashionable vice, by returning to God, and giving a conspicuous example of christian excellence in the circle where its glory is never witnessed, might not save a host from death, and hide a multitude of sins? What headman, in any of the lesser associations of our associating and banding age, might not by his faithfulness, and discreet exertion of his moral influence, anticipate the business of the elect angels, and with more than angelic privilege, gather out of the kingdom many of them that offend and do iniquity; and instead of casting them into outer darkness, bring them within the pale of the saved?

Let us think then of our responsibilities, whatever be our office in the church or in the world, and in the strength of him, who, in them that have no might, increaseth strength, and who renews the power of the faint but pursuing, re-

solve—that whether our companions are to perish or be saved, we, like the holy Apostles engaged in the same honorable warfare, will be a sweet savor to God in both :—that the one shall have no help from us in his career to perdition, nor the other be made to triumph in Christ without our substantial sympathy and aid.

## SERMON XVII.



THE NATURE OF GRACIOUS COMPASSION.

LUKE, xix. 41.

*And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.*

**H**OW different are the emotions produced in different men, by events of the same character ! How totally opposite, in sentiment and feeling, the ambitious and the humble ! The one, standing on the ruins of empires desolated by his arms, weeps at the thought that there are no *more* cities to lay waste, no *more* fields to ravage, no *more* nations to slaughter or enslave.—The other, riding in triumph into the city whose impending destruction he had in vain endeavored to avert, and whose obstinate rejection of the means of deliverance he had in vain warned and entreated them to put away, is filled with compassion, and in view of their self-wrought misery pours forth a torrent of tears. Such, in *one* important feature, is the difference between the man of the world and his followers, and the man Christ Jesus and the children

of the kingdom of God. “And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it—saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee: and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”

Compassionate Saviour! What a model of holy tenderness hast thou left us in thine example! Brethren, did he not *fitly* weep? Would not *your* hearts have melted, in view of that devoted city, the glorious place of the tabernacle of the Most High, and the capital of the beauty of kingdoms? Would not *you* have wept, had you been possessed of conscious forebodings like his, that even his tears of *blood* would avail nothing for its salvation?—That not only his tender expostulations, and faithful admonitions, but even the sacrifice of his *life* in their behalf, should be contemned by the untractable and unfeeling inhabitants of that city, and his blood, according to their imprecation, descend upon them and their children? Ah! no—this is not the man whom the people of this world delight to honor, and to imitate. He who subjugates nations with the sword, and by the terror of his fleets commands the abundance of the seas, shall find nations doing him reverence, and all *kings* bowing themselves down before him. But he who melts at the self-wrought miseries of a whole race, and even of a single city, nay, a single *soul*, is “despised and rejected of men.” Alexander and Cæsar are the objects of the world’s *envy* and *idolatry*; Jesus upon the foal of an ass, weeping over human guilt and wretchedness, is their *scoff* and their *song*. If for this there be not a day of retribution, reason and righteousness per-

ish together, and all our faith in the powers of the world to come is but “ the airy fabric of a vision.”

Jesus Christ, my brethren, shews us, in this scene of his personal ministry, the nature of gracious compassion ; and though it was unavailing to that incorrigible people, it is not, in any instance of its exercise, without its use to some portion of the kingdom of God. *His* were consecrated tears ; their remembrance will be preserved by his followers ; and they will speak a language to the wicked, in the last day, which cannot but overwhelm them with confusion, and justify in their consciences, the sentence of their Judge. I propose—

First, to explain the *nature* of gracious compassion, or pious grief :

And secondly to point out its *use*.

I. They who have been unaccustomed to distinguish, in their thoughts and affections, between holiness and sinfulness, may find it difficult to conceive that any difference can exist in the *nature* of man’s compassion. They will naturally prefer the more common and lax sentiment, that all compassion, pity, grief, wherever found, is in *kind* essentially the *same* affection, and admits only of a common source. But such a supposition cannot stand with the inspired representation of the human and divine character ; nor with a candid comparison of one man with another. There is a sympathetic tenderness of soul, at least in some stages of man’s life, inseparable from human nature. The sacred writers admit, and we are all competent witnesses to the fact, that the very *enemies* of God may be the subjects of real compassion, which still partakes nothing of a divine or holy character. We are all conscious of a kind of compassion which is as easily excited, and brought as sensibly into exercise, by reading a *fictitious* story, as by a scene of distress in the sober realities of life. The *nature* of this emotion may be

neither good nor evil; it may be, in its effect, either useful or pernicious, and cannot, therefore, be of the nature of moral excellence. Having neither benevolence for its source, nor the glory of God for its object, nor any thing *necessarily* useful in its tendency, it cannot be the fruit of his Spirit, and is not therefore entitled to the character of *gracious* compassion. It is found alike, in the heart polluted by atheism and infidelity, and in the soul of the mere speculative believer in christianity. It is often nothing more than the organ, or the instrument, of the most subtle and refined selfishness. It is moved, and moves its subject, to action, without regard to law, to fitness, or to God. If then there can be no benevolence, in the exercise of affection on that which *is not*; if natural compassion is common to men in a state of nature and of grace, then the importance of the distinction, and the reason for insisting on it, must be already apparent. The man of feeling, of great sensibility, and of a ready sympathy with the wretched, is in danger of mistaking his emotions for a holy temper. In order to relieve him from his danger, it is necessary that he recollect that compassion is sometimes witnessed among the *barbarous* tribes of men; that a species of it is natural even to irrational animals. To some of these animals the scent of blood is obviously oppressive, and calls forth signs of tenderness; and the injury of their offspring, and the distress of one of their species, produces loud moans, and bitter lamentations. Indeed, in one of our domestic animals, there is a sympathy extending even to the family of *man*, and not unfrequently exerted in a kind of beneficence substantially useful to a suffering member of his household. Unless, therefore, we are prepared to admit the possibility of religious affection being found in the *brutal* nature, we must abandon the supposition that any thing of the nature of *virtue* is combined with mere natural compassion.

To disembarass the subject still more, take with you to its examination, the well attested fact that our *own interest*, real or imagined, is the exciting cause of natural compassion. To avoid pain, or to secure pleasure, is its ultimate end. Every object in distress, whether intelligent or merely animal, is sufficient, in the sight of a compassionate heart, to excite sympathy. This fact will perhaps of itself, account for all the tenderness of feeling, and all the vigor of exertion, put forth to alleviate human suffering, by those whose springs of action never rise above the earth on which they dwell, and are supplied and fed only from beneath. Since, however, the desire of avoiding pain, or securing a temporary pleasure, is not necessarily of the nature of christian virtue, the conclusion is unavoidable, that there is just ground for the distinction which has been insisted on between natural and gracious compassion.

The *latter* was the compassion of Jesus Christ; and to him all his followers are, in this respect, in some degree conformed. It was not the sight of distress, nor the desire of avoiding pain, nor the prospect of securing pleasure, which produced his grief: but the sinfulness which exposed the people around him, ignorant as they were of their destiny, to unavoidable destruction. This affection, of consequence, has its source in love to God, which is inseparably connected with love to men, and is necessarily of the nature of moral excellence; its *tendency* always salutary, and its legitimate *effects* always good. All distress, of course, does not excite sorrow in the pious mind, or give it pain, as in the case of natural compassion, which is often blind, and weak, and vicious, in its operation. On the contrary, in many cases, it is a source of gratitude and pleasure. For that keenest of all pangs, produced by a conviction of sin, and righteousness, and judgment; and the penitence which usually succeeds, furnish the pious beholder, with a cause of exquisite

delight. Such emotions and affections, in *every* offender against God, are absolutely requisite to his virtue and peace, and are honorable to the Lawgiver. The *purest* spirits, of consequence, behold their operation with *joy*; and there is gladness over such subjects of sorrow and grief, in the presence of the angels of God. Hence, in the instructive parable of the rich man and Lazarus, natural compassion is exhibited in its *best* dress, supplicating the conversion of five brethren, lest they should come to share and aggravate its own wretchedness; while *gracious* pity, equally desirous of their conversion, has an entirely different motive, and operates to a higher and for a nobler end. The first is selfish, and regardless of the divine glory; the last, satisfied with Moses and the Prophets, acknowledges that God has done enough for their conversion, and declines the course of action which natural compassion prescribes.

Gracious compassion is still further distinguishable in its nature, by the *means* it employs to accomplish its ends. The greatest good of rational being is its ultimate end, and the highest welfare of each individual, so far as it is compatible with that of the whole. The means of promoting these ends, must, of consequence, be holy—Truth, fidelity, integrity, and a supreme regard to the authority of God, as paramount to every other consideration. Take an example of no uncommon occurrence. Here is an unsanctified soul filled with remorse of conscience, under a deep conviction of its guilt and danger—it is in extreme distress: *all* agree in feeling a desire for its relief; but all are not equally indifferent about the *means* which should be used to relieve it. *Natural* compassion cries “peace, peace, while there is *no* peace.” It is indifferent to the *means*, so it can soothe the anguish and mitigate the distress, and thus relieve *itself*, and the object of its sympathy, from *present* suffering. But *gracious* compassion looks through this distress, and beyond its suffering, to

a brighter and better day. It had rather *share* the pain, than sacrifice truth, and the honor of God, or the salvation of the soul. It probes still *deeper* the wound, and, like the faithful surgeon, amputates the limb to save the life : withholding all artifice and flattery, and offering no other means of relief, than such as shall secure the divine glory, and the highest interests of the soul. Take a still stronger case—that of the impenitent and unreconciled sinner, on a dying bed. In the fullest exercise, and under the immediate influence of natural compassion, man, tender of his friend, and more tender of *himself*, hides from him his condition and his needs. Unwilling to believe and tell the story of the ghastly face, and of the eye already closing in death, he pretends to see roses on the cheek ; and in his deceitful smile and equivocal language promises a return of health. It is not denied that the pretext is *fair*. It is to prevent the more speedy dissolution of the beloved object, and save it from further anguish. So it reasons, and so it acts. Look a moment, on the other hand, at the conduct of the *gracious* heart. It beholds the unhappy, hopeless soul, on the verge of time, unconsciously raising the wing to take its flight to the judgment seat of Christ. It feels acutely, it is distressed, and thus it reasons. If I conceal at this time this mortal's danger, all hope of his salvation is extinguished forever. If I hide his guilt, he will die in his sins. If he repent not, nor flee for refuge to the hope of the gospel, his soul is lost—the ruin in such case is irremediable. If I speak I shall add to his distress—I shall give a momentary agony to his suffering spirit. In the act of probing *his* wounds, I shall also open one in my *own* breast ; but in *neglect* of this course I do nothing to save his soul from death. I will therefore suffer ; I will cheerfully become the instrument of *his* sufferings for a time, that I may minister to his happy eternity. I publish his danger—I tenderly shew him the urgency of his case,

the necessity of immediate action, the sufficiency of Christ, the only way of salvation. Who now is the monster—who the savage—who the murderer?—The compassion which wraps up the dying sinner in invincible ignorance of his danger, or that which tears away the veil from the eye just on the edge of the precipice, and leads it to look with concern upon the narrow way of life? Let *him* answer who knows the value of a *soul*, and the worth of a *moment* to the dying sinner, when properly employed.\* So reasoned, so felt, so acted the Son of God. He *knew* the time of man's visitation, and with generous aim pierced, and divided asunder, the soul and spirit; and when all these means proved unavailing, and Jerusalem would not hearken to his voice, he lifted up his eyes on the city approaching its fate, beheld and wept.

The *relief* which natural compassion proposes, and with which it is satisfied, betrays its unhallowed character. As it does not inquire into the lawfulness of the means, so neither does it regard the solidity or duration of the comfort which it labors to bestow. You may often witness the most gross deceit practised upon the artless *child*, to pacify its insatiate cravings for improper objects. You may find men administering moral *poison* to the mind, in the means employed to manage a disordered imagination, or to free the distracted and itself from temporary calamity. Is this genuine philanthropy? Did Jesus thus do evil that good might come? No—he would have practised no such guile, to have saved *himself* from crucifixion. He would not have corrupted a

\* These remarks deserve the deepest attention from those Physicians and friends, who are so reluctant to have his real state communicated to a dying man. It may be proper however to add, they are made on the strongest supposition. If a minister's faithfulness is clothed with tenderness, the danger of increasing the disease, or accelerating death, is very small.

single soul, by false doctrines, or unholy stratagems, to have saved a kingdom. It satisfies *natural* compassion to afford relief. It often forgets as soon as possible, the sorrows of an anguished spirit, and weakly strives to ward off approaching evil, by shutting the eyes to the inevitable event. Not so the compassion fitly called *christian*. The object of this is not merely to relieve *itself*, or by *any* means to alleviate the miseries of others. It rests satisfied with nothing less than the substantial, durable and immortal consolation of the sufferer; and exerts itself in the use of divinely appointed means, till this object be accomplished; or if such means fail, weeps over the hardness of that heart, which destroys or prevents their efficacy. Witness the conduct of the holy Prophet—If ye will not hearken, to give glory to God, my soul shall weep *for you*, in secret places. Witness the prayers, reproofs, and zeal, of the holy Lamb of God: his patience, diligence, and meekness; his willingness to suffer, his faithfulness in refusing to heal *slightly* the hurt of the daughter of God's people. Brethren, if we have not the *spirit* of Christ, we are none of his. If we have not *his* compassion, our charity is like sounding brass—always hollow, and empty.

Finally, natural compassion, as it *begins* with itself, and terminates on its own interests, generally ends with carrying its meagre consolations to a *friend*; while that which is of God, is alive to the sorrows of the stranger, extends to the soul of the suffering prisoner, and the wretched of every character and clime, and pours its oil and its wine into the bosom of its hard-hearted and deadly enemy. The proper question is, not what a man's feelings are towards *us*, but what is his capacity for improvement, for dignity, for happiness, for honoring God, and doing good; and what our means of benefitting him? Could the circumstance of the state of men's affection towards *us*, be allowed to govern our

compassion towards *them*, Christ, surely, would not have wept over Jerusalem, nor died for man; nor should we still hear his sympathetic voice, saying to the ungodly, “in strains as sweet as angels use,” “turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die.” *His* nature and example are the model, on which our mercifulness is to be formed, and every emanation of it from him, will beget its own likeness on the heart into which it flows. He wept over his enemies after they had refused to be comforted by him, and died in sacrifice to the virtue which we are so slow to practise, and to suffer to be practised on ourselves. With this imperfect exhibition of the nature of *christian* compassion, as distinguishable from that which is common to man—

II. I submit to your consideration, in the second place, a few remarks on its *use*. Gracious compassion is the source of all human enjoyment. From this flowed the plan of man’s redemption. But for this, God the Father had never contrived, nor the Son executed, nor the Spirit of sanctification applied it, to a single soul. As in God it is a fountain whence all the wants of our sinful world are supplied, and all the woes of the redeemed ultimately relieved; so in man, it is the grand means of enlarging, establishing, and perfecting the kingdom of Christ on the earth. It is begotten in man, when, beholding as in a glass the glory of God, he is changed into the same image, as by the Spirit of the Lord. God is pleased to save sinners through the agency of men. He has made man a minister and a witness, and sent him to turn his fellow-sinners from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. But without the operation of this affection on their hearts, they could not be excited to the labors and trials of the christian ministry;—they would not consent to suffer wrongfully, and to endure the contradiction of sinners, and, by publishing the pain-giving truths of the gospel, to make men their enemies. Without this

spirit of commiseration, no sons of consolation had carried the glad tidings of salvation to a lost and ruined world, nor sons of thunder, at the hazard of every worldly interest, exposed the depravity of men's hearts, and patiently and importunately intreated them to be reconciled to God. It is this which has borne up the faithful in every age, and induced them to take reproach and suffering, rather than inglorious ease, and made them prefer the evils of the cross to that concealment and perversion of the truth, which ensures the friendship of the world. It was this which carried the Apostle of the Gentiles through all the regions of ignorance and barbarism, to proclaim the salvation of God, and subvert the throne of iniquity, and overturn the empire of sin and death: which, in the cause of truth, lifted him above the fears of the Roman sword, and the flatteries of men who would have done him the honors of their gods: which rendered him willing to *die* for the name of Jesus, and for the conviction of his brethren according to the flesh. It was this gracious compassion which waked in the hearts of Swartz and Vanderkemp, the long slumbering spirit of the Apostles, and cut a way through all the natural ties which bind men to their fire-sides, their country, and their altars, to the benighted, dying souls of Egypt and Ethiopia. It is this which has continued the herculean labor of levelling the mountains, and exalting the vallies, making the crooked straight, and the rough places plain, and filling the moral desart of India and the Isles with the waters and the seeds of life. It was this which set on foot an expedition, at which scoffers were amused, and on which natural compassion looked in doubt: against which the Bacchanalia Priests of Europe lifted the finger of scorn, and on which Rationalists of America contemptuously smiled.—An expedition, notwithstanding, which has made Hell to tremble for its strongholds, and the angels in the presence of God to rejoice, for

the honors it has already brought to God and the Lamb. It is this same gracious compassion, which animates the breasts of all christian missionaries, and fires the zeal of all who follow them with their prayers and their alms; and sends after them, through every uncultivated and inhospitable region which they traverse, a blessing winged with benizons from heaven. But for this, no tongue had sung the anthem taught by the heavenly choir at the nativity; no human foot trod the mountains of the leopards, or the vallies of Baca, publishing salvation; no altar had been reared, nor peace-offering arisen, on the bloody pile once sacred to superstition; nor Prophet nor Priest said unto the cities of Judah, behold your God.

If therefore the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour—if the conversion, the salvation, the present comfort or future blessedness of man be desirable—if there be any thing just, lovely, and of good report, in the promotion of such objects—then is there an utility in the affection we are commending, high as heaven and broader than the sea. Not a single step, in the progress of man from moral darkness to light, from corruption to purity, from desperation to hope, would have been taken without its influence. But though of *itself*, it is unavailing to sanctify and save those on whom it operates, it has (even when unattended with divine efficiency) its use. It stimulates to noble and god-like enterprizes, and, in seeking the good of the great family of man, adorns our nature, and does honor to its author. I am sensible that even the sublime spectacle, of the Son of God weeping over devoted Jerusalem, has been thought by some men, unworthy a place in the sacred history. It is, says worldly wisdom, a mark of imperfection:—it was idle for the Son of God, after the day of peace was gone by, to weep. Not so, deluded man!—Those tears are *not* lost: they are sacredly preserved; they are gathered up by the disciples of every age,

and poured out again over their obstinate and impenitent children, their hardened and unbelieving neighbors; over their untractable and ungodly people; over the hypocrite and the deluded professor. Nay, the influence of those tears of Jesus, stops not here: they are laid up in heaven, and will be presented at the last day, as witnesses against those who will not know the things belonging to their peace, in the accepted time and day of salvation. They will be exhibited there, to confound the men who deny, or doubt, his willingness to save—as witnesses of his love, and strong desire for the recovery of those who would not hear, who despised all his counsel, and would none of his reproof. Yes, beloved hearer! those tears, though of no use to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, will have their use in relation to *you*, if you will be his followers; and if *not*, when the wicked shall be sentenced to everlasting despair, these fruits of our Saviour's compassion—these strong proofs of the sincerity of his offers and his efforts, and the genuineness of the benevolence from which they flowed, will flash conviction upon every conscience, and render unnecessary the allegation, “O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself.” It was not *his* indisposition to help, but your incredulity, that ruined you. It was not his want of grace, but the enmity of your heart, which condemned you. It was not his decree of election, but your perversion of your liberty in abusing it, that destroyed you. It was not the impossibility of entering in at the strait gate, but your preference of the broad way, which doomed you to perdition.

Christians! this gracious compassion of Jesus, which fires *your* breast also, which animates your intercessions, your labours, your expectations, and which you have received from his fulness, and employed for his glory, will also be of use to *you* in the great day of account. It will shew the

universe, that you are partakers of the divine nature, that you have been co-workers with God, that you are thereby rendered meet to partake his glory, to enter into his joy. It will render clear, in the eyes of the world, the doctrine that the saints judge the world, and, by the different nature of their compassion, condemn those malignant spirits, who have been the successful agents in the temptations, and sins, and ruin of men's souls. Say not then any longer, it is useless to be distressed, or vain to pray, or idle to instruct, or a hopeless task to reprove, persuade, and exhort, such as still harden their necks, and refuse to surrender their hearts to him who bought them with his blood. Surely, in sight of the moving spectacle at the gate of Jerusalem, you cannot be weary and faint in your minds : you will not be discouraged, nor cease your compassionate exertions to convince, persuade, and save. However often repulsed, however long and patient your labours of love, and though insulted for your fidelity, and finally forbidden to speak any more in that sacred name, you will depart from the presence of his enemies, and weep in secret places for their pride, counting it a privilege to suffer shame in such a cause. And when all the tokens of the divine anger, seem to be arrayed against the obstinate opposers of his kingdom, and they seem given up judicially to delusion, to believe a lie, you will stop, and contemplate with the friend of sinners, their dreadful end ; and if conscious that you have tried all the means of God's appointment, and all in vain, to bring them to the knowledge of the truth, like him you will still have tears to shed over them, and a heart like his to exclaim—O that thou hadst known in thy day the things which belong unto thy peace. Forget not, christians ! that there may be in this assembly some souls, in the very state of those self-willed Jews, whose fate excited the commiseration of the Son of God. If there is

cause of fear, if there is ground to think there are any here who have been often called, and still refuse, O think of them when you return to bless your household, and remember that "Jesus wept."

## SERMON XVIII.



### THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

JOHN, xviii. 36.

*My Kingdom is not of this world.*

**BOTH** the character and designs of Christ have been misrepresented. His friends have sometimes mistaken, and his enemies perverted them. Weakness on the one hand, and malignity on the other, have combined to render them doubtful, or suspicious. Hence he was compelled to reprove his own disciples for their rashness and folly, and the chief priests for their malice and falsehood. The nation who appropriated this King—foretold by Daniel, Isaiah, and other Prophets, as breaking in pieces and consuming all other kingdoms—first mistook, and next perverted their language. At the period of his advent in the form of a servant, to set up his kingdom, this nation were in subjection to the Romans—a power of whose yoke they had long been impatient. They eagerly looked therefore, for the *literal*

accomplishment of this prediction. They expected that according to the course of this world, the first essay of their Prince would be the assumption of the government which the Romans had usurped over them, and the demolition, of course, of that empire. They overlooked those descriptions of their King which were couched in language corresponding with his *actual* appearance, and kept in their hearts, the more lofty and elevated images of the poetic pencil. They forgot, or disregarded, the story of a King coming meek and lowly; and boasted in their Messiah, a warrior glorious in his apparel, treading down the Gentile nations in his anger, and trampling on the necks of only *their* oppressors. In the fulness of time he came; but it was not to rescue the nation from their bondage to the Romans; not to gratify the unbounded ambition of a people who claimed as a *right*, what was never promised them even as an act of *grace*. He came—but unattended with the confused noise of the battle of the warrior, and a retinue of the thirty thousand chariots of God. He came—but it was to blast their unlicensed hopes, and to shew them a more excellent way. He came—but the peace of kingdoms was uninterrupted, the foundation of thrones unmoved. The discovery of these truths was enough, on the part of the Jews, to excite discontent; while the title of *king* sufficed to kindle, in the minions of Cæsar, the fire of jealousy. While from one side, therefore, was heard the cry of IMPOSTURE, from the other incessantly sounded the charge of TREASON. Before the tribunal either of Caiaphas or Pilate, one and the same charge was sufficient to fix upon him the guilt of both these crimes. He assumed the title of King of the Jews. To justify himself, (for he could not deny) it was necessary to examine no witnesses; for before one court stood the Prophets and Apostles, and before the other, the miracles of Jesus were present. His life was an open epistle, read and known of

all men. To confound all his enemies, and establish all his claims, it was enough to answer—"My kingdom is not of this world." He answered thus, and was acquitted, even in the judgment of the friend of Cæsar. He was indeed a king: but neither did his title, nor the authority which it covered, at all endanger the civil rights of any people, nor interfere with the sovereignty of any other king.

The position which forms the whole defence of Jesus Christ before the bar of the Roman Governor, is given us in the text. It is interesting to *us*, as it establishes beyond controversy, according to the description of the Prophets, his claim to the character and office of that Messiah, who began to be spoken of at the first as the desire of all nations, and to whom the eyes of the world have been directed, by the messengers of God, in all succeeding ages. It is interesting also, as it leads to the developement of the *nature* of that kingdom, in the privileges and blessings of which he who has no share, is lost alike to dignity and happiness, to present virtue and to future glory.

It shall be, therefore, our first object, to discover the grand peculiarities of the kingdom of Christ; and to exhibit those features of it, which distinguish it from every other kingdom under Heaven. These may be all comprehended, perhaps, in the foundation or origin, the nature, the object, the means by which it is effected, and the duration of this kingdom.

1. In the first place, the kingdom of Christ is distinguished from every other in its *foundation*. From no other has the prospect of self-aggrandizement been excluded: in most others this has been the bottom corner stone. But the whole basis of this is love. Who goeth a warfare at his own charges? Who plants a colony, for the benefit of posterity not his own? Who ever laid the foundation of an empire, rescued from oppression and raised into a nation, a

people without a name, and eyed no other recompense than the glory of doing good—the exalted pleasure of communicating happiness? That history of nations which leads us to their origin, records no names, nor acts, nor purposes, which do not shrink from a comparison with his, who, though humbling himself to behold things done in heaven, actually came down upon his footstool to serve mankind—to give the universe an example of true greatness of design and action—to found a kingdom in love. The monarch of Babylon revealed the secrets of the founders of kingdoms, when he said, “for the honor of my majesty.” All the illustrious actions of men of any other kingdom have terminated on themselves, and found their source in the love of earthly grandeur. But was it for this the God of Heaven set up his kingdom? Was the admiration of worms an object with him who sits above the cherubim, who makes angels with the breath of his mouth, and before whom all the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers? Were those glories to which the praises of the *perfect* cannot add, to be heightened, by the acknowledgments of the *guilty* and the *vile*? Or are the perfections of the immutable God, sustaining no loss by the defection of angels, to derive some hitherto unknown lustre from the concessions of men? Who will venture to suppose that it was either to retain, increase, or support the honors of his throne, that he has employed them thus? Who imagines, that had they not been made known by their peculiar manifestation in Christ, they should not have equally delighted him? Or will any man say that he who is never acted upon by any thing exterior to himself, acts necessarily when he acts at all? If these hypotheses are too daring or absurd, admit Jehovah’s claim: admit that in whatever particular, in whatever degree, his kingdom resembles that of men of this world, that it is totally unlike every other in having love, disinterested and pure, for its foundation. A

benevolence, exerted not to gain accessions to his honors who is independent in glory, but to give happiness where happiness is wanted ; and by an emanation of himself, without loss, privation, or increase, to fill the intellectual world with peace, and the joys of virtue. In his own description “ God is love.” In his own acts he has taught mankind, that the diffusion of his goodness is his glory, the most proper and the most pleasing exercise of love. Governed by this, he lays the foundation of the mediatorial kingdom when there is none to behold and shout his praise, anticipates with complacency the progress of the kingdom, and continually testifies to the world his pleasure in Zion’s king, and invites men and angels to share with him, in its final result, the most perfect satisfaction. For this shall the saints bless thee, Lord God almighty ; one generation to another shall speak thy praise, to make known unto the sons of men thy greatness, and the glorious majesty of thy kingdom.

2. The very *nature* of this kingdom, as may be seen from what has been said of its origin, distinguishes it from the kingdoms of this world. The glory of these terminates, where the glory of Christ’s commences. In them we hear only of fleets and armies, the number of subjects, extent of territory, plenitude of revenues, the encouragements of arts, improvements in policy, and the interests of agriculture, commerce, and human science. They all regard a transitory glory, and form but an imaginary, and that a momentary greatness. But the nature of Christ’s kingdom is opposed to every thing earthly, fluctuating, and of exterior grandeur. It is altogether intellectual, and spiritual ; cometh not, of course, with observation, but is *within* men. The moral world is the only subject it embraces, and moral good the utmost bound of its operation. The perfection of the rational nature is the only art it cultivates : an interchange of affections, suited to its relations with all beings in

all worlds, its only commerce ; and the divine glory, and the general happiness, the object on which its revenue is employed. The interests of the soul, its glory, and honor, and peace—these are the interests it engages to promote, to enlarge, and to defend. Its nature is learned from the character and enterprizes of its Head—a Prince, who, though terrible in power, devoted it primarily to the interests of truth, and restrained its use to the subjugation of the enemies, and to the correction of the prejudices, the evil passions, and volitions of mankind. He who commanded all the elements, who governed tempests and oceans, whom the spirits of the abyss obeyed, and to whom even the angels of God cheerfully gave homage, had never else submitted to the exactions of the “ little brief authority” of earthly Potentates, nor meekly yielded to indignities and wrongs imposed by the meanest of their subjects. Of the superior *nature* of this kingdom, as well as of its unlikeness to every other, he himself gave signal proof, not only in the extent of his laws and authority over the conscience, and the secret thoughts of the heart, but in that example of deliberate contempt for human empire, and all the glories of this world, which he uniformly exhibited in his instructions and his life ; and particularly, under the insults of his enemies, the vehement intreaties of his friends, and the strange temptation of the Devil.

His rewards also, invisible, remote from human observation, principally future ; and all the motives by which he sought to influence mankind, are of a character so distinct, or so much above those which eye had seen, or ear heard, or the heart of man conceived, as to render them in our world a subject of derision. The *nature* of his kingdom, therefore, is not earthly, but as diverse from that of the world, as it is singular and glorious in its origin. It consumes and destroys all other kingdoms, not by fire and sword, but by a subjugation of those passions whose indul-

gence makes restraint and punishment necessary among men, and whose dominion alone renders the pursuit of power, the business of courts, the machinations of statesmen, and I had almost said, the existence of human governments, practicable. For the law is made only for the disobedient, and “the powers that be” must have been unnecessary, or ordained for some other end, were mankind universally free from such corruptions as render them incapable of self-government. A kingdom, therefore, which, without violence and without injury, consumes every other, must be alike different, and superior in its nature. This truth will be still more obvious, if we consider—

3. Thirdly, the *object* of Christ’s kingdom. “He did not aspire to the throne of Herod, or of Cæsar. He levied no army, and assumed no state.” He sought not honor from men, but with a condescension unknown to mortals, retired before those who pursued only to exalt him; and refused the titles, the emoluments, and the distinctions of every kind, which the children of this world covet, and which its princes demand. His kingdom came not with observation: though resistless, it was silent in its progress; it admits not of *ostentation*, though its *effects* cannot be hidden. The King of Salem aimed not at his *own*, but at the dignity and elevation of mankind—a *real* dignity; an elevation not of the man, but of the *character* of the man—a dignity never to be attained but in a restoration to the divine image, found in none other than him who fulfils the duties of all his relations. He aimed, therefore, at the reformation of the world. Never did a Prince before him, conceive a design like this. It was too pure, too extensive, for any other than a throne which has no fellowship with iniquity, no private or partial ends to serve. To open avenues to wealth, to irradiate the brow of some aspiring family, to extend dominion, to aggrandize one, to the degradation of another portion of

mankind, to ascend to a superiority in external distinction over their contemporaries ; or, at least, to enjoy the privilege of making laws, and coercing their observance, of defining territory and protecting it, of providing a temporary enjoyment of the fruits of genius and industry, and the means of gratifying appetite and passion at the least expense, and for the longest duration, these are among the designs of men who have founded kingdoms.—Designs, which, if accomplished, leave man a slave, and practically teach him to be content with his bondage, to seek no greater elevation, to wish for no higher good.—Designs, many of which are absolutely mean and sordid, and incompatible with Christ's, and the noblest of which he has taught us to make subordinate entirely, to the interests of his kingdom. Who, previous to his teaching, had conceived the glorious plan of bringing man into an acquaintance with God, and resolving his utmost attainable excellence into a resemblance of him, and a subordination of every thought, emotion, and act, to the will of the great first cause ? It was novel as it is grand, and just as it is new. Between the kingdoms of this world and that of the Messiah, there is a correspondence only in titles and in names.

That liberty whose attainment or maintainance, is professedly among the first objects, and the highest privileges of men, has in the one, only the *form* of what is called liberty in the other, and which is secured beyond the possibility of loss to all the subjects of Christ's kingdom. A liberty *worthy* of the distinction demanded for it, the sacrifices necessary to its attainment : a liberty consisting in the emancipation of the soul—actually translating the imprisoned spirit from the bondage of corruption, into the region of light, purity, and peace. Under the dominion of many tyrants, what does it avail me that my eyes see the sun, that my limbs are free from fetters, or that my fields and purse se-

cured from plunder? Yet this is all my national rulers pledge or proffer me. They will neither deliver me from my *pride*, nor cure me of my discontent. This is the capital defect of that freedom for which, in the kingdoms of this world, the globe is convulsed; under the pretext of whose defence, thousands are lured into the chains they are invited to strike off, and still more robbed both of liberty here, and the means of securing its future and endless possession. “My kingdom is not of this world; if it were, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now it is apparent it is not from hence.” The constitutions of earthly kingdoms, however framed, free not even the bodies of the men they would protect. Their authority, however extensive, reaches not the verge of the empire of freedom. But the kingdom of Christ is in power. By touching the very spring of action, he liberates the whole man. “The spirit of the Lord is upon me,” said the herald of this King; he hath sent me to give deliverance to the captive, and the opening of the prison door to them that are bound; to remove the obstructions of the mental eye, and give the understanding wings to soar into the region of things invisible; to strike off the chains that confine it to material objects, and raise it to the comprehension of things sublime; to expand and fill the large capacity, and satisfy the celestial nature with appropriate food. Nay more, for there is a spirit in man as perverse, as the undiscerning intellect is blind—a will as fatal to enjoyment, as it is averse to the pursuit of objects adapted and adequate to mental rest. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there only is liberty—a disengagement of the affections from objects, by whose attainment man cannot be gratified so as to thirst no more. But what power can correct the errors of a heart like this, mistaking evil for good, and pursuing happiness by means which have no influence to procure it? Human authority

professes not to reach the case, nor human laws to provide a remedy. It is the peculiar glory of Messiah's kingdom that it does both. His operations begin here. He moulds not his laws to the will, but conforms the will to the laws. This is to restore in man the image of his Maker, whose laws are a transcript of his perfections. This is to effect a restoration to liberty, such alone as is at once consistent with human happiness and the divine government: for he only can be gratified in all his wishes, who is conformed in his desires to the purposes and designs of him who inspects and governs all. This is a dignified freedom, leaving man not indeed independent of the will of *one* being, but superior to the power, caprice, and direction of every *other* in the Universe—giving one Prince authority over us, instead of a *thousand*; and in place of so many *tyrants*, one good and universal Lord, whose service, demanded alike by his perfections and our relations, cannot be other than perfect freedom. Such is the *object* of this kingdom, and such the direction and end of the authority of its Head.

4. The *means* by which this object is effected, are also exclusively its own. Craft and power, or artifice superior to strength, are the wheels by which other kingdoms are moved, and their proposed ends accomplished. The sanctions of their laws, are founded in an appeal to the basest passions of their subjects. A slavish fear, a thirst for gold, a lust of fame, a hope of power, these are the means of securing the laws' observance; and a suspension of the means of grossly criminal indulgence, the only restraints those laws impose. If there be among men other restraints, or other security, they arise from causes beyond their control. But in the kingdom of which we treat, the means of accomplishing the end proposed, bear no resemblance to these. The object proposed is not to deter from evil merely, but also to excite to virtue, to subordination, to love and obedience;

and to effect this, no lust is excited ; vanity is never flattered ; nor pride, ambition, nor a mere mercenary hope, pampered with appropriate nutriment. The excellence of the object itself, the glory of the divine character and of resembling it, the dignity and happiness of the rational nature, the odiousness of ingratitude, and every other sin, and the dread of losing forever that favor which is life, are among the motives presented to the soul to draw it to its God. The appeal is made to the real *interest* of man, taking the whole of life into the account ; and therefore, to the profit of *all* men, for the interests of mankind, when weighed in *these* scales, never clash. The appeal is made to the finest feelings of the soul—to affections excellent in kind, and needing nothing to render them good in all respects, but a fit object on which to exercise them in due degree. No violence is offered. It would destroy the very nature of this kingdom, to substitute coercion in place of motive. No fraud is imposed. It is a kingdom of righteousness. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.” By the sweet constraints of love, by the disinterested example of its Head, by the diffusion of a benevolence high in its origin as the throne of God, and broad in its extent as the world of souls, does this kingdom rise, advance and reign.

In the kingdoms of men, whatever sacrifices are necessary are usually required of the people—of those who are to enjoy the benefit only in common with the head, and oftener to be excluded from any participation in such enjoyment. In the kingdom of Christ, when an offering is wanted, he *himself* becomes the victim. The loss is all sustained, the sacrifice is offered, by him who governs. Though rich, he becomes poor, that his subjects, through his poverty, may be enriched. The blood of its sons, and the treasures of its subjects, flow not to support this kingdom ; but he who framed, himself sustains it. All the necessary

supplies are drawn from his own treasury, and his inheritance in it consists of his subjects—"The Lord's portion is his people." Its arms are truth, and righteousness, and faith, and hope, and love. In every contest (and contest is unavoidable) the *King* provides the arms. The resources are derived in no case from his subjects. He ever leads the way, and *his* arm ensures the victory. He enjoins no humiliation, nor self-denial, on his subjects, in which he has not been before them; nor is any loss to be sustained, any danger to be encountered, any enemy to be overcome, in which he has not led the way, and first taught by example. And after all, reversing the customs of this world, all the solid benefits of victory, and the honors of a triumph, accrue to his subjects, and are awarded, not merely to the chieftain, but his followers. There is an efficacy in so disinterested an example, and a glory in means like these, superior to all the contrivances of mortals.

5. There is a fifth peculiarity, in the structure of Christ's kingdom, which evinces the same fact, and too singular to be unnoticed—I mean the adaptedness of its laws to all intelligencies, and its progress among all people; indicating the hand and heart of none other than the universal Father—the governor and Lord of all. Here that dissimilarity of customs, habits, usages, tastes, which prevent the assimilation of men of different nations, and which renders impracticable a unity of law and government, ceases to form an obstacle to the establishment of Christ's kingdom. He collects subjects out of all nations, and makes of one heart and one soul—subject to the same Prince and the same laws—men of every tribe, and kindred, and tongue. At once they speak the same language—the language of the heart, of piety, of benevolence, of heaven. No such difficulties as bound the extension of every other kingdom, check the progress of this. In its infant state it was seen advancing, in defiance of

every species of opposition, and surmounting obstacles which have presented hitherto an insuperable barrier, to the extension of the kingdoms of this world. It still progresses in the same manner, circumscribed by no lines which caprice or malignity, nature or art, have drawn, and is making its way in every clime. It resists principalities and powers, the arms of human policy and strength, and the gates of Hell: finds voluntary subjects in the very fortresses of its enemies, and breaks in pieces and consumes, all kingdoms hostile to its interests. Nor is there any thing astonishing in this, on the supposition that *his* heart is in it with whom nothing is impossible, the empire of whose Providence is unbounded, and the influence of whose Spirit, is like the wind, unseen in its causes, and like the fire, irresistible in its power over every thing combustible. This Spirit is in the gift of him who is at the head of this kingdom, the name on whose vesture is "KING of kings, and LORD of lords:" to whom was given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all nations should serve and obey him; and before whom, the dominion of the beasts is taken away, and their lives prolonged but for a season and time. That time hastens to its close. The heathen are becoming his inheritance, and in the uttermost parts of the earth, his right begins to be acknowledged and his kingdom known.

6. But, in the last place, the perpetuity of this kingdom distinguishes it most gloriously from the kingdoms of this world. And this thought connects the first and last heads of this discourse—in the very origin of it, the means of its perpetuity are ensured. Because God has pleasure in it, it will stand when the kingdoms of this world, founded in lust and cemented by corruption, shall have been destroyed by the very power in which they originated. This kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and to the dominion of its Head there shall be no end. Duration is every thing. It

gives increased worth and consequence, to every object which is in itself of any value. Earthly thrones, by reason of the materials of which they are built, tend to dissolution. The principles on which they are founded are defective. But could the great laws of nature be reversed, and these foundations become immoveable, they would boast *one* glory, which now they cannot claim. How enviable a peculiarity, then, has that kingdom, which is both perfect in its nature, and perpetual in its duration ! Which shall survive the wreck of every thing man has sought to make immortal, and continue to increase till time itself shall be no longer !

In mournful succession, the kingdoms of this world have lost their glory and their names ; become the prey of ambition, or some kindred spoiler ; mingled in abasement the Prince and the subject, and sunk into the gulph of a nameless perdition. Like them, all kingdoms built on the same defective foundation, must be dissolved. “The Lord of Hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul it ?” The kingdoms of men shall have an end, and all not tributary to Messiah, shall perish. Thus must it be with the land of our nativity, and our delights : thus with all nations, until he whose right it is, shall be universally hailed as King ; and the kingdoms of this world become, indivisibly, the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and all people cheerfully serve and obey him. Already to some, which *our* eyes once saw proudly elevated, and fearing no sorrow, the prophetic denunciation of Messiah’s herald has been verified—“Hades from beneath is moved to meet thee : it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth ; and hath raised from their subterranean thrones the departed monarchs of the earth. They speak with the voice of sympathy.—Art thou become like one of us, thy pomp brought down to the ground, and the noise of thy viols ? How art thou cut down which didst weaken the nations !” But the kingdom of Christ has an im-

moveable foundation. It stands on the perfections of Jehovah. Its perpetuity is secured by the oath and the nature of God.

Give then, who will, your power and strength unto the Beast ; God shall have thee in derision, and the angels who look on, shall hiss at thee. “The people of the saints of the most high God,” shall ultimately possess the dominion under the whole heaven. For who is God save the Lord, who has sworn it, and who is a rock save our God ? Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever ; thy sceptre is a right sceptre, above all that are called gods ; therefore shalt thou reign till all enemies are subdued beneath thy feet.

In the application of this subject, most of the discriminating marks of the kingdom of Christ furnish us with a reflection.

1. In the first place, since this kingdom is founded in love, *they* must be totally devoid of virtue who oppose its establishment in every place. Charity is the bond of perfectness—the only bond which can permanently unite rational minds. It is the only affection, which ensures a just subordination among the several ranks of the intelligent universe ; which cheerfully allows God the throne, and every inferior spirit, a place nearer or more remote, according to his approximation to the divine image. Hence love is the discriminating mark of the subjects of this kingdom ; and enmity to God and man, and of consequence vice and infamy, the badge of those who are opposed to the complete and universal establishment of the christian empire.

2. As the nature of this kingdom is spiritual altogether, the renovation of the human heart is essential to those who would share in the benefits. No man lives and sinneth not. Sin is the transgression of the law of God. To restore men to the obedience of this law, is the object of Christ. Already it has been deduced from the preceding truths, that the

opposers of this kingdom are at enmity with God. The universal denial of this fact proves man's destitution of spiritual discernment ; and this being either proved or acknowledged, the necessity of such a transformation to wisdom, life, and love, becomes incontestible.

3. In the third place, as the *means* by which the kingdom of Christ is advanced are also spiritual, its interests are never promoted by a conformity to this world. "The weapons of our warfare are not *carnal*." The spirit of persecution in all its forms, and the principles, and maxims, and practices of the children of darkness, can never be advantageously applied, or have any other than an injurious tendency, in this kingdom. Its true subjects are distinguished, therefore, by their practical opposition to the world. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth. I am not of the world, said its founder, of himself—and of his disciples, neither are they of the world.

4. In the fourth place, as this kingdom is in power, defying all opposition, and surmounting all obstacles to an extension to every land, the warfare of its enemies is a desperate warfare. The overthrow of this kingdom has engaged, for many centuries, the combined efforts of a great portion of this world, and of all the world below ; but its walls are still salvation. Its progress is silent, but it is irresistible. It will never be subverted, for God is at its foundation. *They* fight against his whole family, in heaven and earth, who practically reverse the petition—"Thy kingdom come."

5. Finally, as this kingdom is in its duration without end, it ought to be a subject of very serious inquiry with every man, whether *he* has an interest in its perpetuity. Will it add to your stock of happiness, that this kingdom stands when the foundations of the earth tremble, and its pillars, with all the objects which contributed to your enjoyment, are removed out of their place ? Are you numbered

among those who, when its glories shall be consummated, will make the arches of heaven resound with the song of triumph and of joy—"Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ." Let us be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come. The answer to this enquiry, you will find in the testimony of your consciences to another :—Is *your* kingdom of *this* world? Say where is your conversation, where are your treasures, where is your heart, and you say at the same time that the perpetuity of this kingdom is the earnest of your eternal joy, or of your unavoidable despair.

## SERMON XIX.



ACQUIESCENCE IN THE WILL OF GOD.

JOB, xxxiv. 33.

*Should it be according to thy mind.*

**T**HE government of God is a great deep. He maketh darkness his pavilion, and thick clouds of the sky. He doth his pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand. Reason looks on, as he developes in his providence the counsels of his unfrustrable will, and is confounded. Philosophy stretches over the mixed scene her microscopic eye, and pronounces it the effect of chance. Religion follows, and presents to man a thread which conducts him through the labyrinth into a plan of perfect wisdom and beauty. She exhibits Jehovah at the head of all might and dominion, guiding and controlling every movement of the natural and moral world, maintaining the same agency in the flight and fall of the sparrow, and in the rise and destruction of nations.

She exhibits something of his natural and moral perfection, in the passivity and action of all his creatures, and in all the vicissitudes by which they are affected ; the divine hand operating every where and at all times, to the same ultimate benevolent end, for “ God is love.”

In the hands of such a being more absolutely than the clay in that of the potter, does it become the thing formed to say, why hast thou made me thus ;—to resist his will ;—to express, or even to *feel* opposition to his pleasure ? Shall a worm dictate to its maker ; or dare to murmur when he dictates to *him* ? Must the earth be forsaken for thee ; or shall the rock be removed out of its place ? Should God give up the management of the world, to stop the complaints of a man, and should his counsels—firmer than its pillars—be changed to gratify the humor, and support the consistency, of the little creature at his feet ? The question comes home to every bosom, for there such arrogance has found a covert. Such is the temper of the unsanctified : and good men, when unwatchful, have fallen after the examples of unbelief. Wisdom and goodness are on the throne : dominion and might are with him. Should any thing, then, which can become the subject of human volition, not as contrasted with that of other creatures, but with that of the Most High, “be according to *thy* mind ?” Turn thine eye inward, and examine thy present temper : backward, and recollect the past. Hast thou never quarrelled with the constitution of God ? Has he duly proportioned the sea and the land ; the gifts of his providence, and the measures of his grace ? Have the revolutions of the seasons, and of the heritages of men, been ordered to thy liking ? Are the laws of matter and of mind wisely fixed ; and are endowments and pleasures properly distributed ? Was the original condition of man well devised ? Are his present state and future destiny, fitly suspended upon conditions under the control of another’s will ?

Ought man, *in nothing* to be independent of his Maker? Ought not thy will, though at variance with that of God, sometimes to prevail? Much do we mistake the inspired description of the human heart, if it strive not thus; and equally, the character of God, if he do not visit for these things, if his soul be not avenged on such a nature as this. Come then, and let us reason together; and frame our ways and doings into compliance with the law and government of God.

1. In the first place, we are men, and have only derived rights; we should therefore never prescribe to God. No derived power can, with any semblance of truth, claim the right of giving law to itself; and, without regard to the will of its superior, fix its own destiny. God has made all things for himself. Creatures of every order are his property, and have no more claim to dictate an article of their constitution, than the axe, the saw, or the hammer, to lift itself against the artificer who handles it for the purpose, and in the manner, which pleases him. The prerogative of God cannot be questioned, to give law to every nature, and to do what he will with his own. Of himself, and of the several orders of the Universe, his is the whole disposal; and from the very nature of God, it is a contradiction to admit his being, and question the propriety of his works or his designs. The *intellectual* weakness of a created nature, is, of itself, a prohibition of rising against him in judgment. Of the relation and tendency of events, man knows nothing; but is indebted to his Maker, no less for the knowledge of what is right, than for his power to *be*. His capacity, compared with that of God, is nothing. The capacity of man is small, compared with that of *other* intelligent creatures; and small as it is, is not filled. He is not qualified to judge at all, but by the revelation of God, over whom, in the very act of judging him, he exalts himself. And if he say he have

derived from *him* the means of deciding on the propriety of his acts, and yet is dissatisfied with his Sovereign's conduct, he does but affirm that Jehovah has condemned himself. Man sees not far, even in the race of time ; and whence his prescience, to declare what is to be accounted good at the end of the course, and in relation to eternity ? Who passes sentence upon actions detached from their causes, and consequences ; and without even an apprehension of what is to be their issue ? Did such a procedure in Jacob, on the loss of Joseph, establish its wisdom ? Was it, as he decided, the most adverse event of his pilgrimage ? That train of blessings which we see to have been suspended on it, to himself, to nations, to the world, and to all Messiah's kingdom, should have taught us to be still till the mystery of God is finished. Is man unqualified, when the hand of God is in it, to pronounce judgment on an event so simple as the selling of a boy, and does he condemn for its weakness, or question for its want of rectitude, a plan which comprehends the whole counsel of God ? He has forgotten that he was of yesterday, and born like the wild ass' colt.

2. But were it otherwise ; were it admitted that he has a right to be consulted in the work of God, you will observe, secondly, that *every* man might challenge an *equal* voice in council. And to what an indefinable fraction would this reduce the portion of individual influence ? What is one man in a universe of minds ? And what were the government of the world, were each to be consulted in the determination of events, which are ultimately to affect the destiny of all ? No individual stands or falls alone ; and though his particular interest be involved, God, in all his operations, has regard to the concerns of his whole kingdom. How immense the number and variety of interests at stake ; and what movement of the great First Cause, can be said to have no bearing upon them all ? What event is so small, as to contribute

nothing, directly nor indirectly, to that grand issue in which every creature, and the great God himself, is interested? Shall a single mind then, which is to the whole but as the mote to the globe, indulge a wish to prescribe to God; to settle a question, or guide in a decision, which has not been submitted to its judgment? Does such a mind deem itself sufficient, by its own powers, to take the responsibility of forming the character, and fixing the destiny, of men for eternity? Who, on the contrary, finding himself occupying but a point in this unbounded vast, and among myriads of spirits perhaps the weakest, and most insignificant of them all, who would dare, in the presence of God, announce *his* will, and set off his pleasure, against the known decision of Jehovah? To the doctrines, the commands, the providence of God, who ventures to oppose his own will? Such conduct were *madness*, were it not *sin*—

3. For, in the third place, were there but one man on the earth; were the inhabitants of other worlds unaffected by the events of this; did God himself lay aside every other consideration, and live and act only for that man, and for the gratification of *his* will, he would destroy him at his own request. For who knoweth what is good for him? Who of all the race, was ever happy by means of his own prescription? Whose spontaneous designs and hopes, were not first reversed by the action of the Almighty, before he understood the nature of happiness, or the way of its attainment? Who would save his *life*, did his existence depend on his own measures? The mariners who shipped with Paul, were prevented by dire necessity, from executing their only hopeful scheme of deliverance from a watery grave. It was by opposing their wills, and counteracting their wisdom, God enabled them all to get safe to land. The wife of Jacob perished, by the very means she deemed essential to her temporal enjoyment. Israel loathed the food provided for them;

God listened to their complaints, in anger gratified their desires, and by the sustenance they demanded they died. So the cross of Christ, a stumbling block to the Jew, and folly to the Greek, becomes the occasion of the second death, though it be nothing less than the power and wisdom of God unto salvation. Who can look upon these examples, and suppose himself wiser than all who have preceded him; and possessing the same nature, and subject to the same defect of foresight, imagine himself capable of securing a happier result, while disposed like them, to select and prescribe, instead of submitting to the appointments, and following the prescriptions of the only wise God? Who is not prepared to admit, that his only safety, as well as wisdom, and righteousness, and glory, results from humble confidence in God; of whom nothing is to be affirmed, the converse of which is not to be found in man! To his omniscience, we oppose ignorance: to infinite benevolence, selfishness: to his wisdom, folly: to truth, deceitfulness of heart: to goodness, desperate wickedness. We are impotent to think any thing as of ourselves, and to will and to do, in a strength *opposed* to his, is but to array briars and thorns in battle with devouring fire; while to act in concurrence with Jehovah, is to move with everlasting strength—with a might which calls into being at will, the things which are not, and annihilates, or converts to *his* purpose, things that are. Self-willed and arrogant spirit! think of these things; and under the impression of their divine origin, answer the enquiry, “should it be according to thy mind?” Will you resist or acquiesce in the government, will you oppose or yield obedience to the gospel, of God?

4. But, in the fourth place, it ill becomes him who so resists, and so opposes, be his condition and his prospects as miserable as they may, to complain of them, or of him who orders them, because he is the creature of corruption.

Could the arbiter of the world proffer him any condition his heart desires, a just sense of his deserts would constrain him to decline the favor. No man should even *wish* to be happy, but upon condition of his acquiescing in that moral constitution which the perfections of God, merciful and gracious, have established in his sight. Were such a desire lawful, God could not have forbidden by revelation, any such expectation. It is forbidden; we cannot, therefore, make any such proposal. He will appoint the sinner his lot. He has purposed and who shall disannul it? His language is, “my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” The decision is made, and cannot be reversed. It is written in the words of that book to which no man may add on pain of death, from which none may take away but on the same forfeit of eternal life.

Men talk of the law of nature—of finding implanted in every creature, a desire of happiness. But are the law of nature and the written law, at variance? Or is the law of self-preservation so at war with the evangelical law, as to render the violation of the one, indispensable to the obedience of the other? Who does not perceive, that this is to claim for God an inglorious kingdom—a kingdom divided against itself—and therefore, by the decision of Jesus Christ, a kingdom that cannot stand? God has implanted no desire in the human heart, which necessarily tends to undermine the foundations of the kingdom of grace. Yet such is the desire of happiness founded in opposition to his character, and law, and government. Whoever cherishes hostile designs against his throne, can be made happy only by its subversion. So says every Prophet of God; so said Jesus Christ, in the terms of the gospel. Submission to God is the only possible hope. The happiness of no other than the submissive soul, is agreeable to the divine will. To encourage the expectation, or desire of happiness, in him whose

heart is set against the heavens, is to encourage licentiousness. It is conniving at the criminal project of evading the penalty of the law, and defeating the grand design of the christian redemption. In sight of this object, can a man wish to retain his wickedness and suffer nothing for it, and still be obedient to a law written on his heart by the finger of God? All the desires of a heart struggling for independence, are opposed alike to every law which God acknowledges to be of his enactment. Does he excite desires or hopes, which he has solemnly pledged himself never to gratify? Or are those desires lawful, which are indulged in defiance of the threatenings of his word? Is the spirit of the Lord in this? Are these his doings? How then does it appear, that they who walk in pride are ever to be abased? How does it appear that the heavens do rule? If that heart be *qualified* for true enjoyment; if the moral constitution of God have rendered its happiness compatible with a state of alienation from him, and insubordination to his government, how shall it be made to appear that the Redeemer has loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and for this is made pre-eminently glad? No—under the extremest misery which is entailed upon a heart opposed to God, he who has any sense of what is just, any conception of moral fitness, will either cease to desire exemption from suffering, or submit himself to God. Humble yourself, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, or lie down in thy shame, and let confusion cover thee.

I am aware that no bad man is satisfied with the establishment of an inseparable connexion between sin and suffering; but to every such man, I present the fact as being agreeable to God, and ask of his conscience—"should it be according to thy mind?"—Shall he that *hateth* right, govern; and the voluntary servant of sin, by complaining of its penalty, rebuke his sovereign? The fire shall cease to burn upon every

rebel who throws down his arms, and no miracle shall be withholden which is necessary to the encouragement of virtue ; but never will God acknowledge holy or laudable, any desire or action of a heart, which is found fighting against himself. “ He resisteth the proud forever—but giveth grace unto the humble.” He has sent forth his edict to mankind, to hush every rebellious passion : he has given command to the world, to conquer every perverse affection. “ Be still and know that I am God.” “ I will be exalted among the heathen. I will be exalted in the earth.” Every creature shall cease his opposition to Jehovah and be melted, or feel the thunder of his power, and be broken in pieces, as the vessel of the potter is shivered.

Let us see how the wise man of the East met this question, when, instead of the young man who proposed it to his consideration, Jehovah was perceived to be the inquirer : when he saw himself to have been arrayed against the Almighty, and to have instructed and reproved *him*. “ Then, Job answered the Lord and said ; I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee : therefore have I uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful, which I knew not. Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee ? Once have I spoken, but I will not repeat it ; yea twice, but I will proceed no further. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee ; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Look upon the elevation from which he had fallen ; attend a moment to his example, and learn the duty in every condition and prospect of this life, of unqualified submission. God had given him extensive possessions, and an understanding heart. He was prosperous, and he was great ; and at *his* wisdom, the *wise* asked counsel. To *him* the mourner repaired for comfort, the beggar for life. He was to all intents a king, without his title or investiture. He

had children like a flock, and an affectionate heart to appreciate the blessing—a wife, and she was as his own soul. He had health to enjoy them all, and friends to double the enjoyment, by sharing with him his happiness. Over all, he had knowledge of the true God, and had seen by faith something of the glory of his Redeemer. Thus blessed, he said unguardedly, but as a man, “I shall die in my nest.” Suddenly the heavens are dark, and the earth fails under his feet. His immense possessions are ravished from him by freebooters. The fire of heaven has scathed his habitations, and left him childless. The nerves strung with vigor, and the muscles clothed in beauty, are made naked and loathsome by disease. The wise, who asked counsel at his door, reproach, and the beggar, who there received his bread, derides him. The mourner whom he comforted, has no prayer in his calamity. The friends who loved his *table*, charge his misfortunes to hypocrisy; and the dogs of Idumea, who for their vices shunned his venerable presence, insult the sufferings which might disarm enmity itself. Even the wife of his bosom deserts him; and over all, the God in whom he *thought* he had taken refuge, leaves him to his enemies! Are you prepared to hear him criminate the providence of the Most High? Shall his attachment to the world lead him back to its *idols* for a comforter? Must not his passions blind his understanding, and drive him to despair? O! learn the power, and seek the comforts, of religion. All is well with the man who fears God—Naked came I out of my mother earth, and naked shall I return thither.—“The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Bring hither the blasphemer, who charges his wretchedness on the want of goodness in God—the miser, whose ungodliness is gain—the votary of pleasure, the child of ambition, the philosopher, and the fatalist—and let them unite

in the acknowledgment that he who feareth God shall come forth of them all. Tyranny may inflame indignation; a weak judgment may disproportion punishment to crime; an imbecile Prince, however bent on rectitude, may bear the sword in vain; but wisdom and might are with God, and all *his* judgments are done in *truth*. He is “a just God and a Saviour;” and he expects us in every condition to say—“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Let his dread fall on us, and his excellency make us afraid.

1. From this view of the subject, let us learn our obligations to rejoice, that men and all their works, are in the hands of God—learn, I mean, to treat it as a practical truth, and cordially submit both to the precepts and the providence of God. Pharaoh could admit the Lord to be righteous, and he and his people wicked, and be unsubmissive still. 'Tis death thus to admit, and decline the duty we acknowledge. 'The duty of submission is an extensive duty. A brute may suffer, and be passive under the reign of God. Man, as he is fitted, is to be active under his reign, and having followed out the *precept*, to submit the issue in the sentiment of the best model of piety—Father, thy will be done. Then without shame, remorse, or disappointment, he may meet his fate in peace, and triumph in the song of the holy—“The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.”

The christian is interested in this truth. It is *his* God, whose love is alike tender, efficient, and unchangeable: and his good and that of his child, is identified with the darkest event, and the highest honors of his throne. Take from him what he will, his bark is secure, and he will rise on the swelling billows toward the object of his chief desire, and ride at length, by the promise of the Eternal, into his destined haven. Through every cloud of the mysterious way in which he passes, he hears behind him the voice of encouragement—Your light affliction is but for a moment; it

worketh out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Every thing is adjusted to the accomplishment of this end, in behalf of him that believeth, and ever ministers to the encouragement of patience and hope. Why say you, desponding soul! "Did I but *know* that God were my friend, I could, from respect to his will, do all things and endure?" Do it then, without the assurance, and the point is gained. Do it, and you no longer *dictate*, but *obey*.

2. I ask the wicked, in the last place, to compare the way of *his* steps with the christian course, mark their respective issues, and turn at the reproof of wisdom. Is there another alternative? Will he neither be satisfied with subjection to the curse of the *law*, nor submit to the terms by which alone his Ruler proposes to give him freedom? I ask him, in view of the several considerations laid before him, if a cordial and unreserved submission to one or other of these courses and issues, is not the *only* course of feeling and action in which a man can respect *himself*? Who would ask the approbation both of himself, and the enemy against whom he contends? Who insist on the possibility that contending armies both may conquer, both be vanquished? What king, going to make war, consulteth not whether he be *able* to meet the enemy; and in defect of skill and power, desireth not conditions of peace? Open now thine ear, champion of rebellion! to the voice of God, which, either in whispers or in thunder, is ever sending abroad, to correct thine error, the seasonable admonition—"Wo! to him that *striveth with his MAKER!*"

## SERMON XX.\*



### THE VALUE OF LIFE.

**T**HE Chief Magistrate of this Commonwealth has summoned us together, to recognize the hand of a merciful Providence in the peace and plenty, health and happiness, enjoyed by its citizens during the past year. He encourages us to recount our common favors, and devoutly to ascribe honor and glory to their Author—our supreme Benefactor. Among these favors, he particularly commends to our notice, a competent supply of the fruits of the earth, general health, the prosperity of our husbandmen, manufacturers, fishermen, and mariners; and the advantages of commercial and friendly intercourse with other nations. He calls upon us to bless the wisdom which inspires the love of science, and a disposition to cherish its schools; and bids us acknowledge divine revelation as the basis of this life's best enjoyments, and the

\*This was the author's last public performance. He appeared pale, feeble, emaciated; his bodily frame hardly supporting the activity of his spirit. But he spoke like a man, conscious of the value of life in a benevolent point of view, though about to leave it. The sermon produced a deep impression. He seemed like one, lifting up his head from the grave to tell his people what it is, that makes life precious in the estimation of a dying christian.

only source of knowledge and hope of enjoyment, in the life to come. To the praises of God in such extent, he recommends that we add earnest prayer for the prosperity of our country in every thing relating to the *temporal* benefit of society; penitent lamentation for the prevalence of crimes which degrade man's moral character; and supplication for that spirit of reformation, which shall render us meet for the enjoyment of the inestimable civil, social, and religious blessings which have been transmitted to us from our ancestors, to be conveyed unimpaired to our posterity. The proclamations of the Governors of two neighbouring States, enlarge the list of mercies to be acknowledged, and of the topics of praise, by adding to every common and temporal blessing, those of "the gift of God's Son, and salvation through him;" and "his abundant mercy to Zion, in *her* prosperity and enlargement, through the effusions of the Holy Spirit, and the success of the efforts of that active benevolence which characterizes the age." To the *confessions* already proposed they would have added, the "humble acknowledgment of our failure to requite the Lord, according to his benefits, with love and devoted service, and to honor him with our substance, and the first fruits of all our increase;—the acknowledgment of our violations of his holy law, and abuses of his blessed gospel." To the petitions and intercessions of the people also, they recommend, 'that we implore pardon for Christ's sake, and conversion from all our iniquities, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty; that all our Rulers may be guided *constantly* by divine wisdom, and all this growing nation favored with the glorious gospel of the blessed God;—that religion and science may more extensively pervade our own land; oppression, superstition, idolatry, scepticism, and all irreligion and vice, be banished from every other, and all the kingdoms of this world be subjected to the righteous dominion,

and restored to the holy and everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' (Parris and Butler.)

But while *these*, without exception, are proper subjects of thanksgiving and confession, supplication and praise, I am constrained to turn for my text, to a chief magistrate of ancient time, under the immediate guidance of God; and I find him comprehending all his obligations, in the *preservation of his life*; (this in fact involves even the privilege of praising God in his sanctuary, and in the firmament of his power) and thus, on the ground of *personal* favors, erecting a monument of fervent and perpetual thanksgiving to God, so long as he has any being—

ISAIAH, xxxviii. 18, 19, 20.

*The grave cannot praise thee ; death cannot celebrate thee ; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth : the living, the living, he shall praise thee as I do this day ; the father to the children shall make known thy truth. The Lord was ready to save me ; therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord.*

HEZEKIAH, the author of this animated hymn, and of the holy resolution which it proclaims, was among the most illustrious Princes who ever graced the Jewish throne. He was alike distinguished for political wisdom and religious zeal. His brief biography, should be inscribed on every brow that wears a crown, and humble every breast covered with the badges of civil or ecclesiastical authority, not emulous of his distinction. It was *his* excellence, that in all the extent of his influence he enforced the laws of God, by making all his edicts subservient to that righteousness which exalteth a nation, and subversive of those principles and habits which are a reproach to any people. "Thus," says the

historian, “ did he throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good, and right and truth, before the Lord his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with *all his heart* and prospered.” Blessed art thou O! land, when thy governors are descended of nobility like this ; and blessed *he* to whose name shall be awarded, by such a judge, a testimony so honorable, an influence so efficient and so salutary.

But we are not come hither to-day to eulogize *man*, living or dead, of ancient or of modern time. Enough of this has already occupied the ingenious labors of the civilian in the year that is past. It is our privilege to leave the departed chief magistrates of the American people to an undisturbed grave, and to refer the decision of their ultimate destiny to a more competent tribunal. From all *creatures*, whatever may have been their earthly distinction, we are, on this anniversary, to transfer our eulogies to God—the Author and Benefactor of all. And whence could we have selected a better model of our duty, than is placed before us in the public commemoration by Hezekiah and his people, of the mercy of the Lord in having given us our life for a prey? To us, whoever else is deprived of the residue of his years and gone to the gates of the grave, to us remains the obligation and the privilege of offering the praises which the grave never renders, which death never celebrates ; and to diffuse among contemporaries, and transmit to the generation which is to come, the truth which is hid from them who have gone down into the pit. Let us mingle then, with the praises which Hezekiah perpetuated through so many ages in the Jewish sanctuary, the same holy incense in this court of the Gentiles—*Thou, O Lord, hast been ready to save, therefore will we sing our song to the stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord forever.* The sentiment

adopted from this model, and now to be enforced, is—THAT IN THE PRESERVATION OF EVERY VALUABLE LIFE, WE HAVE GROUND FOR HOLY GRATULATION AND THANKSGIVING. And what life is not thus valuable? Not excepting even the basest of men; since on its continuance is suspended the salvation of the soul: and, in case of the christian householder, the welfare of a family, or the means of blessing the commonwealth, and a common country; or the nobler and more extended privilege, of contributing to the advancement and the glory of the kingdom of God our Saviour. And for the preservation of a life of such immense importance, personal or public, and rendered still more so by the condition of the age in which it is prolonged, every one of us is to feel his obligations, and to give account to God.

1. In the first place, to many of us God has lengthened out a life, on whose continuance is suspended the means of personal piety, and the acquisition of the salvation of the soul. How many hundreds do I address, who, but for the distinction which the sovereignty of God alone has made between them and those who have gone to the congregation of the dead, had lost the possibility of a happy immortality? Who in the last, as well as in all preceding years, have forfeited anew both the blessings and the offers of salvation, and cut themselves off, by neglecting the provisions of redeeming mercy, from even the hope of praising God forever? Tell me not, then, you are under no obligation to praise your Preserver for this, because man's life is so much a vapor; and the love of it so much decried in our sacred ethics; and because to *live* simply, or to live only for *present* enjoyment, is confessedly a wretched portion. Life is so much the *more* invaluable to him, for whom to die would be no gain. And by as much as life is worthless in view of its brevity and vanity and labor, by so much is its prolongation of infinite importance to the *sinner*, and worthy

the expression of his public, religious, and perpetual praise. Because, in this is involved the renewed favor of every thing like privilege to the wretched ; of every means ever to be enjoyed of rendering possible to him the pursuit of glory, and honor, and immortality, by which alone everlasting life is attained. To him it is of equal value with the virtue and the heaven, whose acquisition are suspended upon the proper use of that fragment of life which remains. And even to the christian, it is as important as the perfection of his personal piety ; and the honor and bliss of contributing to the furtherance of christianity : and this, you will remark, is the grand object for which the existence of the world itself is prolonged. And it is only in these lights we can either hope, or desire, to impress your hearts with a weighty sense of obligation to God, for preservation from the pit where you could not *hope* for his truth ; nor for the opportunity to make it known unto your children. Remaining in bondage to his lusts, and feeling only a selfish interest in the prolongation of life, the sinner, I am aware, does not make any just estimate of the favor done him in this respite ; and is of course totally dead to this sentiment of the monarch of Judea, and men of kindred minds. Yet even *he*, however unwilling to yield it, cannot fail to *perceive* his obligations to give his whole heart to the praises of his Preserver. Yes, to the wicked life is more eminently a peculiar favor, than to the righteous. They have a far deeper *personal* interest in its continuance ; far higher obligations are *theirs*, to the compassion and favor of God for this benefit. Think of this in your estimate of this day's privilege, or you will know nothing of the blessing freely given you of God, nor render to him on this occasion, any thing of the devout adoration and gratitude which you are come up hither to express.

The grief of Hezekiah at the delivery of the Prophet's message—"Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die"—

did not arise from a mere love of life ; nor the love of the world ; nor a dread of death, and its momentous issues. It originated in the profound and affecting thought, that unless a respite from this sentence were granted him, the welfare of his family, the prosperity of the nation, the peace and stability of the church, were to derive from his prayers, and example, and labors, nothing more forever. And it was because for him to live, was to glorify God on earth, and to be of some benefit to his great moral family, that his benevolent heart deprecated the prospect of an early removal to the land of darkness ; by which all its liberal devices, and holy purposes, should have been unavoidably left unaccomplished. And because he is the model of our devotional sentiments, and songs of gratitude, this is to be the—

2. Second part of our illustration. Consider then, how much of the welfare of your families depends upon the Providence, for which the living alone, of all the heads of our households, are urged to praise God, as the righteous do this day. And let us not fail to observe, through all the following illustrations, that in *our age, life is of more value than it ever was before* ; and that in its preservation, we have so much the greater cause for gratitude and praise to its Preserver, as our facilities, both for superior personal piety, and public usefulness, are more numerous and extensive. An ordinary citizen now in our country, if he have Hezekiah's heart, may be more a blessing, and more blessed, than that monarch : may diffuse light and joy more widely ; and bless mankind, both good and evil, more richly ; and make his salutary influence to be felt through a larger mass of the generations to come. And for the obvious reason, that the dispensation of grace under which we live is more enlarged. No longer is it confined to a single nation ; no longer is the good proposed to man, through the efforts of human benevolence, a contemptible offering in the eye of the nations ;

nor are those who are the objects of these efforts universally a gainsaying and incorrigible people. Ethiopia stretches out her hands unto God; the Jew begins to despair of a Messiah yet to come; the Isles wait for his law, "and all nations sigh to be renewed." By means of the progress of knowledge and commercial intercourse, of science and just sentiments on the subject of human rights, the growth of free institutions and the increase of wealth and religious influence, distant nations are brought together, intermixed, and taught to feel more the sensibilities of a common nature, and a national brotherhood; and to see that the fullness of time is advancing, for a gathering of the inhabitants of the globe to a common standard under the banner of Messiah the Prince.

It is in such an age, Parents! your children, and those of another and another generation will live; and under the auspices of this reign of grace will their sentiments and habits be formed; and their influence, civil, moral, and religious, receive its direction; and by these means will their destiny be fixed for eternity. And what use you will make of the high privilege God has given you, for forming their characters, directing their influence, and fixing their destiny under such facilities, your remaining conversation in the world is to testify. Think of the difference, which only half a century has made in the means of useful and sacred knowledge. Many a parent who hears me, can, from personal knowledge make the comparison; and thence estimate the superiority of the present means over former advantages. *Now* instead of only Dilworth's Spelling book in the schools; and Watts' Catechism in the nursery; and Janeway's Token for children in the history of God's wonders in the church; you have the elements of every science to put into the hands of children, brought down to the level of their capacities; and compendious histories of the whole religious world, in

the most alluring garb, to elevate and enrich their minds ; and all the means necessary to make them as ripe in knowledge and understanding, in the greenness of youth, as were their ancestors generally, at the end of their inquiries. A few devoted mothers then, favored with peculiar and extraordinary teachers, could by personal assiduity, do something for the elevation of their offspring. But how much did even these, labor alone ? Well qualified *helpers*, in our common and sabbath schools ; in every department of agriculture ; and the mechanic as well as the liberal arts ; in literature too and religion, are within *your* reach, to train the rising generation to all that is valuable in knowledge of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Who then, if he wishes for the benefit of his family and of his lineage, and would see them emulating excellence in a secular profession, or set in order for eternal life, can reflect how little his ardor of feeling and enterprize for their improvement, have kept pace with his growing facilities for accomplishing so much good to his household, and not thank God for sparing him a fragment of life to fill up in zealous efforts for redeeming the loss, and in holy achievements for their good ? Who will think it a small thing, to have lived one year longer for such a purpose ? Who will not surpass the devout Hezekiah, in pious recollections and thanksgivings, when, with the remembrance of the *personal* favor done him, he associates the fact, that for the sake of the offspring of his body, God has renewed the opportunities of the fathers and mothers in Israel thus to make known to the children his truth ? Ah ! mourning households, they that have gone down to the pit, cannot hope for this !

3. But, in the third place, the opportunities of fulfilling the duties of our citizenship, and blessing the whole Commonwealth, are comprehended in the benefit now under consideration. This every man can do, and is bound to do,

whatever be his station, both by his oath, and the laws of his country and his God ; and this he can do, only by obeying her laws. Long ago was it proclaimed from the bench, by one of those precious few of the Judges of our country, who give ample evidence that they both fear God and regard man, that “Every wicked man is an enemy to his country, because he breaks her laws ; and spreads the contagion of vice around him ; and because his conduct has a direct tendency to bring down the vengeance of heaven on his country. There is no other way of discharging our duty to it, but by yielding obedience to *all* her laws : not this, or that, but *every* law. Some dislike one, and some another ; and there are some so bad they hate *all* law. One is averse to the law of the sabbath, and therefore he breaks it ; another, to that which forbids swearing, and therefore he breaks it ; a third complains of the law that restrains diversions on Sunday, and therefore he breaks it. What is to become of a country, where the laws are thus insulted and violated by every man at his pleasure ? Christianity stands or falls with the sabbath ; and if it does fall, will pull down with it the pillars of government, and bury our country in ruins. That man who obeys only those laws which please his humor, and deliberately violates those he disapproves, I venture to assert, has not a single drop of patriotic blood in his veins, or benevolence in his heart. Possessing a particle of either, he would cheerfully acquiesce in every law that has any tendency to promote the general good. Has the law said, thou shalt do no unnecessary work, nor practise *any* diversion on the sabbath ? He that offends in these particulars, and against both heaven and earth, is a bad *citizen*, and a bad *man*. He can have no better pretension to the character of a good citizen, than the robber on the high-way ; though there be a difference in the nature and degree of these crimes.” Such is the bold language of truth and integrity,

addressed from the bench to a jury of our country. For *once*, then, the language of the Pulpit and of the Forum has spoken the same thing, in regard to the duties and the character of the citizen. Enjoying the protection and blessing of government, he is bound by every lawful means, instead of violating, to support the laws. He has no claim to live to himself, or even to his family, to the injury of his country. In a representative government like ours, his responsibility to the community for the character of his rulers is direct and mighty. The qualifications of magistrates are fixed by the Almighty; and it is not by any liberty which man can give, that they may be unfixed or dispensed with by the act of the citizen. The character of the laws, and of those whose duty it is to execute them, are in all the extent of his suffrage and his influence, with *him*; and *he* will be called to give account of them to God. The source whence the power *emanates* is the responsible agent; which, in this case, is the will of the people. The morals and happiness, the good or injury of the community, rest in a measure on the agency of every citizen. The crimes which our Chief Magistrate calls on us to lament as degrading the moral character of our community, are therefore *our* crimes; if we have neglected any of the duties of good citizens by which they were to be prevented.

What a privilege is ours then, of exerting all our influence to diminish them, and make that community virtuous and happy. How valuable the continuance of a life on which depends, in any degree, the decision of the question, whether the vile shall be restrained and the virtuous protected; and all that is just in principle, and good in morals, be maintained or subverted. Whether the institutions on which the dignity and glory, as well as safety, and even *existence* of social order depends, shall be honored or trodden down. Whether profaneness, debauchery, gaming, intemperance, fraud, sab-

bath-breaking, and the other common vices of the time, shall meet the law's rebuke, and the public frown; or find countenance in the unresisting and pusillanimous silence and inaction of the citizens. Every man cannot say that the vices of the community shall be reformed or restrained; but he *can* say, that nothing shall be left undone, which it is his duty to do, to produce that most desirable and salutary improvement. But when death has terminated your citizenship, your whole activity and influence in the decision is lost to the state. Had you gone to your fathers, your memory would perhaps ere now have been forgotten, and your influence unfelt, and neither your advice, counsel, nor effective agency by example, had given this year a verdict for God and your country. You would have furthered no longer the cause of virtuous liberty; nor the peace, stability, and happiness of society, against the ever busy influence of unprincipled and immoral men. In the cutting off of your days, a blow had been given to the authority of the righteous, in whose rule the people rejoice; and in the grave of a truly virtuous citizen, had been buried the one talent or the ten, for the want of whose proprietor the righteous always mourn. Every man who loves his country may, without immodesty, perceive and feel this; and therefore be thankful for the preservation of a life which is to be devoted to the public welfare. The loss of every such citizen, however humble his name or station, is a public loss: the preservation of his example and influence, a cause of public gratitude, because it is a public benefit—and because the country has but *few* such faithful citizens to spare or lose. What would have been the fate of Israel, in the event of Hezekiah's exit in the midst of his years? And what better than bands of tow, are the sinews of any government committed to raw, unstable, immoral, and popularity-seeking young men; or, what is worse, men grown hoary in devising schemes of

a corrupt policy, to supplant the statutes and maxims of the wisdom which is from above. Let those maxims take deep hold of our sensibilities and our deeds. For if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? And if the breaking down the bulwarks reared with the religious institutions, and principles, and moral habits of the fathers of New England, is to be the effect of the prolongation of the lives of this generation, better (will they who come after us be constrained to say) better for them had we been swept away together with the besom of destruction, and perished, like the profligates, in the flood. When these bulwarks are destroyed, no good man will hesitate to feel, and to lament, that the glory is departed.

4. But a higher and more extensive privilege, is involved in the benefit of a life prolonged in circumstances like ours: It is that of directly advancing the kingdom of Christ on earth, to its consummation. In regard to the facilities afforded us for this, we have only to say, that the benevolence which has ever existed in the breasts of God's people, is now furnished, like that of the seraphim above, with many wings, in the associations which serve as pioneers, or depots, or messengers of christian philanthropy, to the world of indigence surrounding us at home, or the wilds of ignorance and wretchedness abroad. Of such associations, the society which to-day reminds us of our privilege, is one of the many which exemplifies this truth. The poor we have indeed always with us, and when we will we may do them good. But how vast the difference between searching out the cause we know not, at the expense of personal and daily assiduity, and supplying the subjects of poverty and distress, with the means of healing their sicknesses, and softening the asperity of a solitary and unconsolated death-bed; and making others the almoners of both our worldly and spiritual bounty—the instruments of ministering a meagre pittance to the necessities

of a hundred distinct fellow-beings, as they respectively require, at hundreds of timely separate visitations! By similar associations, we carry to the rapidly peopling forests of our own country, to the Islands of every sea, to the Pagan world, and the climes of every shore unchristian and uncivilized, the benefits of knowledge, and the institutions of that pure and undefiled religion, which are alike the basis of intellectual and moral freedom.

“For this end was I born, and for this end came I into the world, to bear witness to the truth.” Error, scientific or religious, cannot be a permanent basis of individual or national felicity. In relation to this object, it is but “the fabric of a vision.” The end of Christ, is, by divine authority, to be the grand aim and end of all men. None, by permission of the heavens, lives or dies unto himself; and for whatever object other than to do good, any one lives, however successful, he will die poor and blind and wretched. No ultimate good is attainable by any means other than those proposed in the gospel; and these are the communicative spirit, and the benevolent temper of its Author. These therefore being of the very essence of holiness, are of the nature of privileges. It is, of consequence, among the greatest of blessings to have that life extended, in which alone the great family of man are to be benefitted by our voluntary agency. Man cannot practise a greater deceit upon his heart, than in holding tenaciously the maxim, that he diminishes the amount of his own enjoyment in the same proportion that he ministers, from all his resources, to the real good of others. It is a sentiment contradicted by the whole economy of God, who surely knows, and of consequence adopts and executes, the wisest measures for glorifying himself. It is contradicted too, by the experience of the wise and the virtuous part of the community, in all parts and all ages of the world. The result of all this experience, even

to the end of the world, the prescience of Jesus Christ has anticipated, and left on record, in the memorable saying—“it is more blessed to give than to receive.” And he is the more easily credited in this paradox, as it was explained by him in giving his glory and his life in sacrifice, as a ransom for the wretched and the lost. Here then, is your standard for the value of life; and being virtuous and happy in proportion as we approximate it; and our life being valuable, in proportion to our facilities for approaching the measure of the stature of his fullness of beneficent action towards mankind; how do our obligations swell and rise as we advance in the illustration? For look abroad over the world: survey the mass of human ignorance, superstition, degrading servitude, and misery, and see what an unbounded field for such effort, the exercise of such virtue, and the use of such privilege, remains to us and the following generations, before the empire of truth and happiness shall have become universal. That it *will* become so, and by the agency of *man* too, is certain. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts is pledged to such an issue. Though the work be but begun, it is begun to the complete exposure of *their* folly, who, half a century ago pronounced idle and visionary both the object—the illumination and conversion of the world—and the means proposed for its accomplishment. Three hundred stations, distant as the poles, designated for the site of religious missions; a thousand witnesses for Christ proclaiming thence the glad tidings of salvation; among them, four hundred preachers converted to Christ, and themselves preaching the faith, which, according to the predictions of unbelief, they could not be made either to understand or to receive; forty thousand souls disioled cordially to christianity from the various pagan tribes; and two hundred thousand children redeemed from the pupilage of idolaters, and training up to disseminate the principles of truth and to scatter the seeds of wisdom among

their barbarous countrymen ; and forty printing presses, actively engaged on the very fields claimed by antichrist as all his own, now scaling the ramparts and demolishing the bulwarks of ignorance and sin ; these, these are the testimonials to the truth that the work is, with rational expectation of success, commenced ; and unambiguous exhibitions of the value of the judgment and foresight of sages and the learned—of the worth and tendency of the opinions and effects of unbelief ! Where is the wise, where is the scribe, where the disputer of this world ; hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world ? And where is the band of faithless, and consequently inactive, or opposing hearts, who heard the command—“ Go preach my gospel to every creature,” and never so much as inquired after the means of executing the great commission ? Gone, beloved hearers ! by thousands, to the judgment seat of him who sealed that commission with his blood ; there to answer for disregarding the authority which signed it, or regarding it only as worthy the attention of fishermen, and their enthusiastic followers ; and we are left to fill up what was lacking in the labors of all those who have gone before us. Brethren ! what a privilege is ours ! *The living, the living, shall praise thee, O ! thou Preserver of men, and Lawgiver, as well as Saviour, of the world, as we do this day.*

The work, I have said, though sure of accomplishment, is but begun. At home, the very fount of knowledge—the word of God—is in some of these christian republics, in the houses of but one quarter of the families which make their population ; and without *this*, man is but the slave of hopelessness, and ignorance, and sin ; an heir to perpetual mischief and misery, without a mitigating or alleviating circumstance in his condition. In the whole of the South American Empire, Asia, Africa, and many parts of Europe, the Bible is in far fewer hands. And out of the eight hundred millions

of the world's inhabitants, a fourth part only are nominally christian: and of these you will remark, not less than one hundred thousand are indebted for whatever of civilization and christian privilege they enjoy, to modern missions. The reward is liberal indeed, for the time and the stinted exertions of the christian nations.

But consider a moment some of the facilities for augmenting both the exertions, and the sources of pleasure and profit to mankind, even with little labour; and of effecting extensive good by small means, in a short life. And this too, not as in times gone by, by *one half* the species only: for it is a peculiar feature of the age, that this sphere of usefulness is enlarged to admit that sex, and those youth of both sexes, whose labors and whose influence were formerly limited to the narrow circle of the school room and the walks of domestic life. Now they are fellow-laborers with us, in all the extent of the household of God. Hèzekiah, and the men of his age of kindred mind, had almost every thing valuable to accomplish by personal assiduity, device, and enterprize. Even the Apostles of Jesus Christ, were little more encouraged by finding associates in their labors. If they wished the gospel to be preached in Italy or Spain, or Gaul, or among the Islands, they themselves were to be the missionaries. Did they deem it their duty to publish and scatter it—they must see it transcribed with pen and ink; and transported perhaps from one Province or Colony to another, on their own, or the shoulders of their friends. In our time three thousand Bible Societies, with as little labor as was then demanded for a few copies, place hundreds of thousands at the disposal of the benevolent; and they, by a word's speaking, and the avails of a few days' personal labor, spread them among the destitute in every quarter of the globe. In their day, the attempt to convert Jew or Gentile, was attended with both difficulty and

danger; and was often made at the sacrifice of every temporal comfort, and at the peril of life itself. To Jew and Gentile, you give the same hopeful means of knowledge and salvation, by merely laying up a portion of the superfluous products of your industry, as God has prospered you; and following it to its destination with your persevering and cordial supplications for the wretched, and for them who have volunteered their services and forsaken all, to tell the wretched, words by which they and their households may be saved. You stand upon the margin of your own peaceful river, where goes no galley with oars, and which bears to you upon its tide, the delicacies of every clime; and with better success than if you crossed the Pacific yourself, may rescue an hundred children, on the banks of the Ganges, from a watery grave; or a burning widow from the funeral pile of her husband. With only the heart of an Apostle, or the spirit of Dorcas, you instruct a generation who know not God, ten thousand miles distant, without leaving your fire sides, or yielding one social enjoyment; and talk, in the person of some friend or acquaintance of your own State, to an hundred idolaters in the Southern Ocean, of the way of salvation; their hearts burning within them, and the tears of penitence and gratitude bedewing their furrowed cheeks, as he walks with them by the way, and opens to them the scriptures, on the beach beneath the Palm, or within the posts of their ruder sanctuary. And all this, it is your enviable privilege to do, without diminishing your power to enjoy for yourself the *fullness* of the blessing of the gospel of peace—without endangering your liberty, your life, or even your competence.

And when you would warn the wicked on your shores, or send pungent conviction to the heart of the God-defying sailor on the seas, who exposes his *spiritual* as well as natural life, to protect or accumulate property for you; instead of

traveling over the country, or traversing the ocean, you accomplish your object without any painfulness of rebuke, or hearing of blasphemies, by means of some of those thousands of silent but insinuating messengers of mercy, ever ready at your order to speak to him in God's name, to judge him out of his own mouth, and, like a true Prophet, to say to him, "thou art the man."

Such are the facilities God has given, and in our spared life renewed to us, for pleading the cause of mercy, and doing homage to truth, and at the same time most effectually doing good to man. Thus it is too, men of the most ordinary endowments and humble gifts, or woman, or child, needs only to know the day of visitation and what the Lord our God requires, to be *great* in the kingdom of heaven. The least of us is enabled to act upon a greater intellectual and moral surface from year to year, than even an Apostle; and the poor widow, guided by God, and under the influence of a prayerful spirit, may accomplish more good, than the wealthiest and the wisest Jew, in the earlier days of benevolent christian enterprize. What is not life worth, my brethren! under such auspicious circumstances? One fervent prayer, with corresponding action, accomplishes *now* the object, formerly possible only to an age of miracles. And as the day draws on, in which the mystery of God and of sin are to be finished, and the glory of the church and of its Leader to be consummated, every hour of our life will become more and more valuable; every thought and deed more important, and influential on the soul's eternal destiny, and pregnant with great and glorious, or deadly consequences to one's-self and to mankind. Let us each give glory to God, then, and excite others to praise him, not in word and in tongue only, but in deed and in truth, that by his gracious forbearance he has come in view of the king-

dom at such a time as this ; and is still allowed to act according to his own pleasure in its behalf.

And now, to conclude the illustration and to enforce the duty of such praises, (for such only are God's delight,) let me say to you beloved hearer ! of all these privileges and facilities for doing good, and for the spared life which involves them all, you must render an account to God. I may have set before you truths with which you have no fellowship, and obligations to the praises of Jehovah, for what some of you deem an unwelcome duty. But to be spared one's life for such purposes, is a proof of God's love to our souls ; because death terminates the opportunity to execute them. And those whose consciences tell them that such are not their desires ; that their lives are not to be voluntarily employed in doing good, but in exerting an influence, personal or domestic, civil or religious, adverse to the interests of Christ's kingdom ; have cause to fear that God has prolonged their lives, that they may fill up the measure of their iniquity ; and complete the demonstration that they are unfit for the kingdom of God.

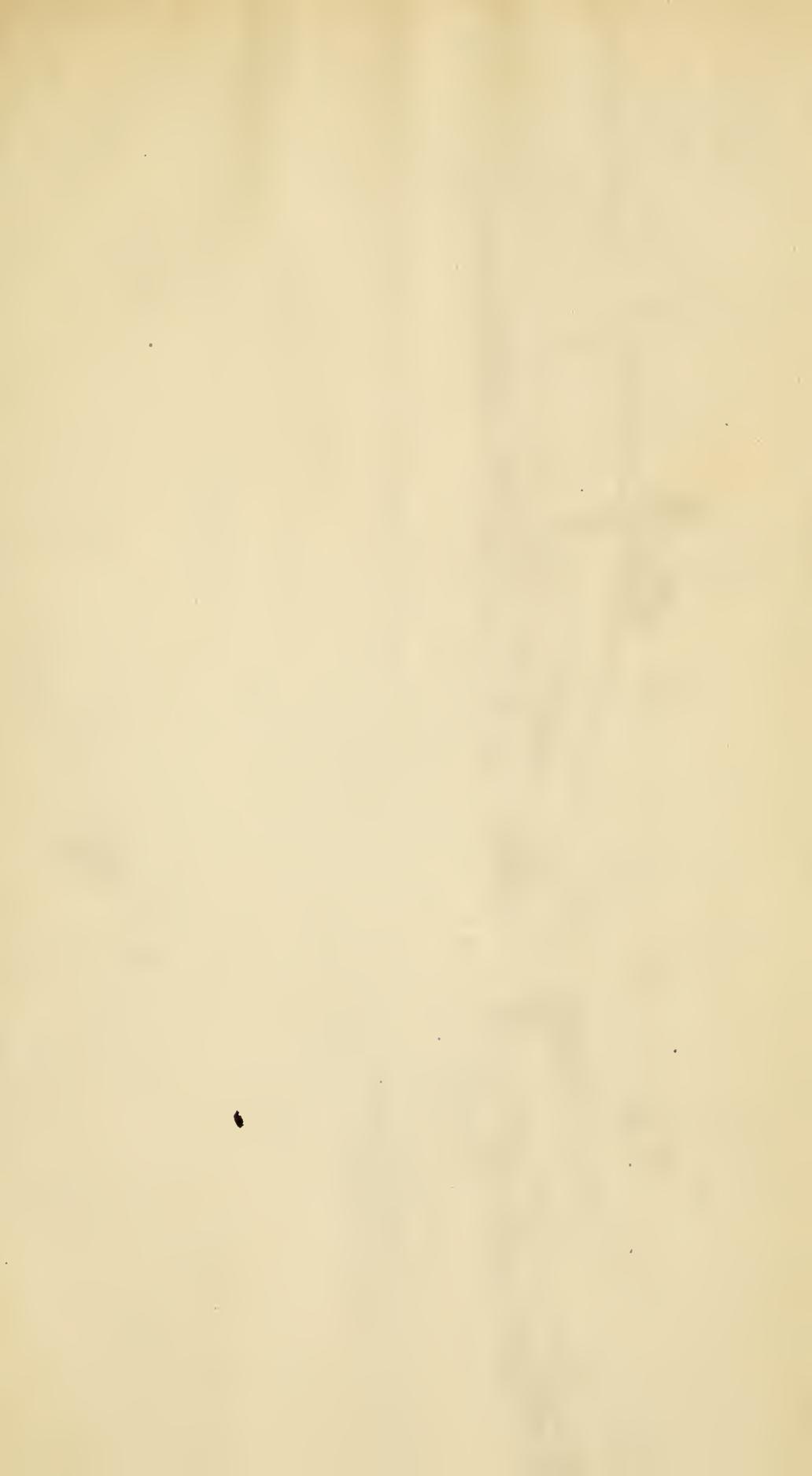
Hezekiah's life was preserved in answer to his prayers ; and thus it was God's gift and deserving of praise. But to them whose life has been given them for a prey *without their asking*, it is an indication of their unfitness for death ; and an exercise of forbearance which seems to say—give glory to its Preserver, by making all possible advantage of the present respite. The obligation to do thus is founded, not on the distinction between christians and unbelievers, but on that between the living and the dead. *The living, the living, they shall praise thee ; and sing my song in the house of the Lord forever.* What is *his* errand into the world, who neither comes to scatter blessings among others, nor is engaged to secure his own salvation ? Will he hope for God's truth in the grave ? Will he make known his righteousness

to his children, when the worm is feeding on him; or triumph in the thought, that the Lord, in his life time, was ready to save, but he had no faith in his truth?

And now, beloved hearers! having made known your obligations to the loving-kindness of the Lord, and to sing his praises in his house—let me propose the inquiry, as you rise to give the answer, and depart every man to his own house—will you devote the soul redeemed by blood, and the life ransomed from the grave by almighty power, to yourselves; or yield the soul, so vast in its capacity, and the remnant of a life so comprehensive of privilege, to God the Redeemer of the one, and of the other the acknowledged Preserver?







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