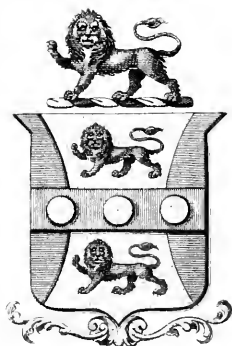


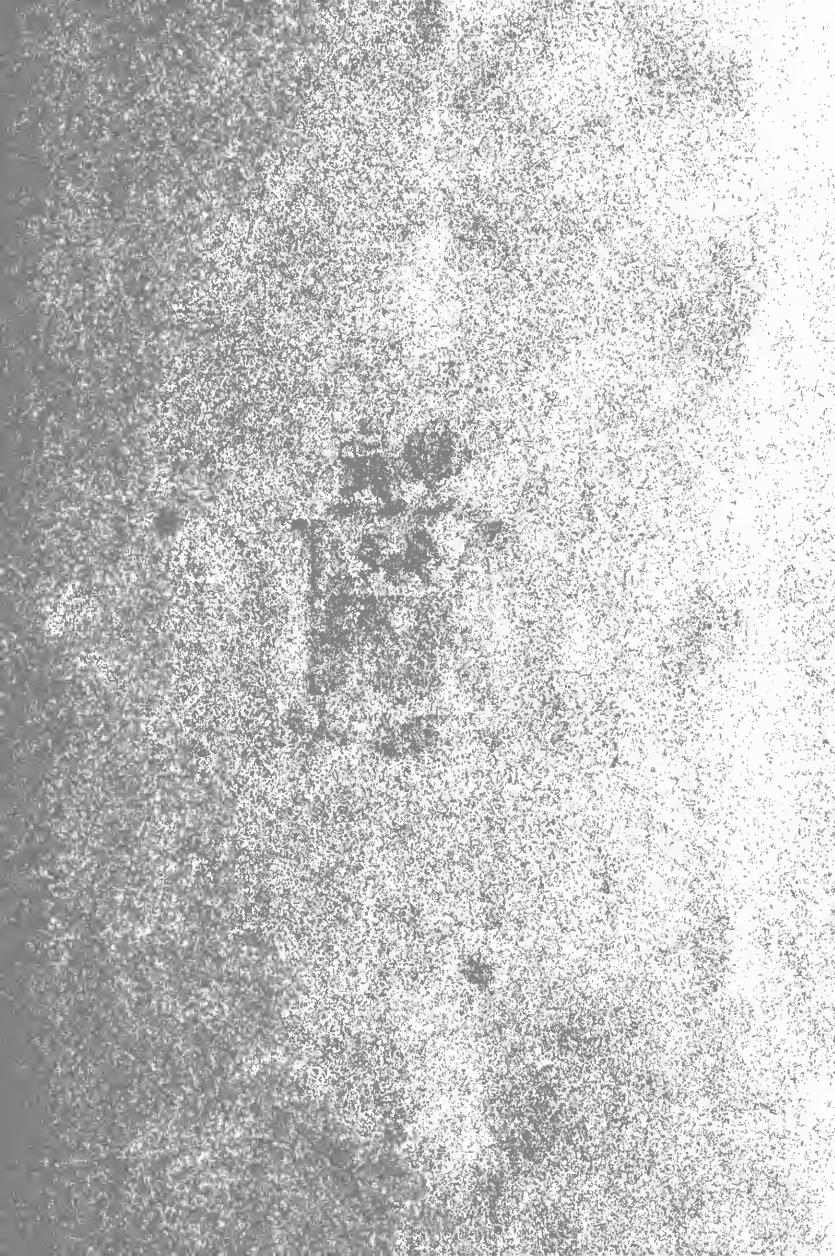
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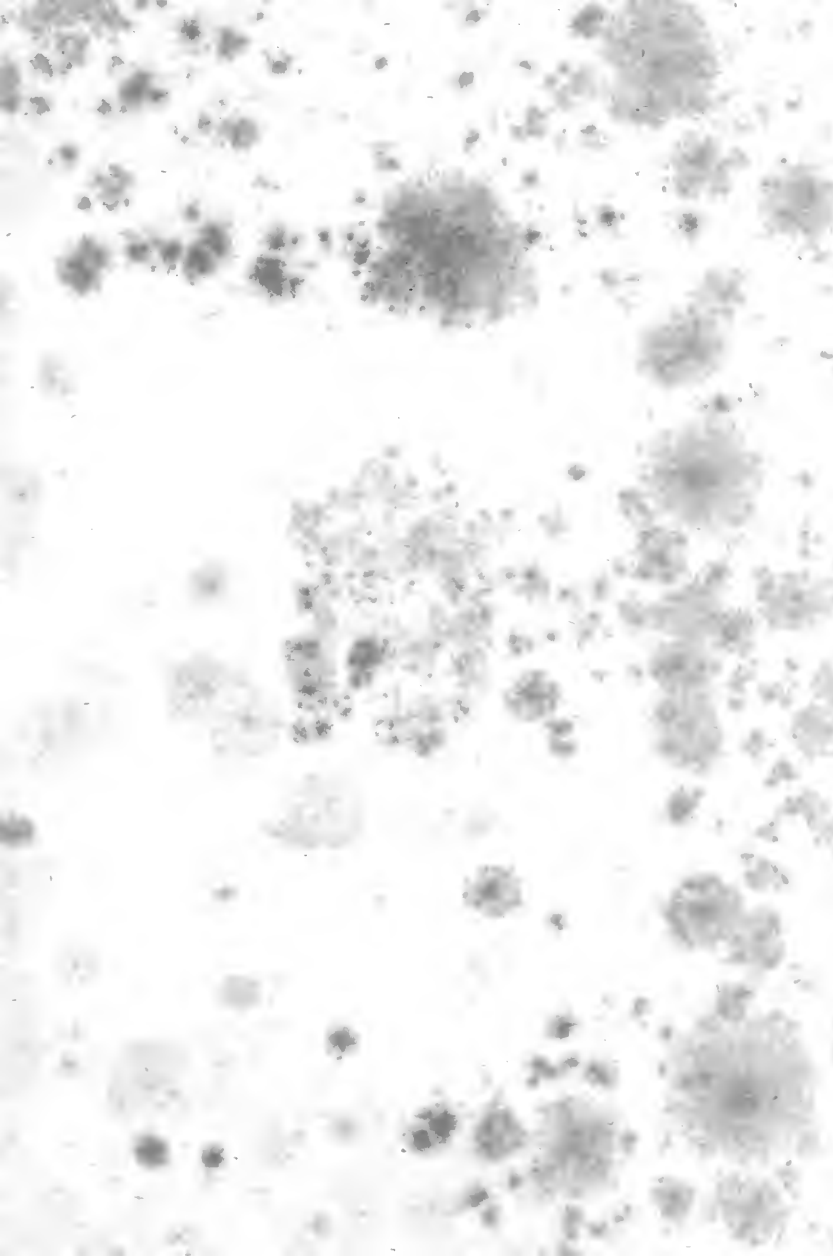
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S E R M O N S,

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

BY

PHILIP DODDRIDGE, D. D.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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SERMON I.

AARON'S SUBMISSION.

LEVITICUS, x. 3.

And Aaron held his peace.

OBEDIENCE to God's commanding will, and submission to his disposing will, are undoubtedly the two great branches which comprehend the whole of practical religion. The former I have frequently urged, and the latter I shall now recommend to your consideration and regard from this most memorable instance which we have here before us in Aaron, the high priest of the Lord; whose two sons, Nadab and Abihu, had just been struck dead by the Lord for presuming to present strange fire before him contrary to a command which he had lately given. On this occasion God sends a very solemn message to Aaron; *I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me; and before all the people will I be glorified*: and, when he received it,

SERM.
I.

SERM. we are told that *Aaron held his peace*. In
 I. handling the subject, I shall,

I. Consider how much excuse Aaron might have had for complaint in his present circumstances :

II. How much greater reason he had for the silent submission which he here expressed ; and then,

III. What improvement we may make of the whole.

If there be any of you, my friends, on whom God has in a remarkable manner laid his afflicting rod, you have reason to attend with peculiar care. If your health has been impaired, if your schemes have been disappointed, if your family has been invaded by death, and those who were dear to you are now sleeping in the dust, be it known unto you that this example and this charge are especially for you ; more peculiarly for you parents, from whom God has taken away desirable children by a sudden stroke, whether sooner or later, if any such hear me on this day. But give me leave to add that you are all concerned in the subject which is before us. Before the return, perhaps, of another sabbath, the most vigorous constitution may

be weakened, the most prosperous condition be embarrassed, the most pleasant family be invaded by death. It may be, some of those children and friends, who are now with you in this place of worship, may be laid low in the dust of death; and that those, who think themselves least interested in such a discourse, may be the first called out to act upon it: and, possibly, this unconcern may render it needful that God should punish them with such a stroke. Hearken then, I entreat you, to this example of Aaron, that if you are tried and exercised in any degree as he was, you may learn like him to *hold your peace*.

I. Give me leave to show how much Aaron might have said to excuse some complaint in the present case. His tenderness could probably have furnished a great deal more than I can point out to you: nevertheless it is obvious to remark some circumstances which might have been urged as a plea, at least to extenuate, if not to justify, some expostulations with God, and some complaints against him. And I verily believe that when I have mentioned what easily occurs to my thoughts

SERM. I. upon the occasion, you must, many of you, own that your own sorrows are very little and small, when compared with this under which he was silent, whereas you are complaining. He lost in one day his two eldest sons, when grown up to years of maturity, when lately entered on the honour and service of the priest's office; and he lost them by a sudden stroke of Divine vengeance in the very act of their transgression against God. Let any parent in the assembly imagine this case to be his own; and then let him say whether he would not have been tempted to some extravagancy, and, perhaps, to have said with Jonas, *Surely I do well to be angry*¹.

¹ Jonas iv.

6.

1. Aaron had lost both his eldest sons in one day.

The death of one child goes very near to the heart of a tender parent; and if we meet with one whom God has broken *with breach upon breach*, we think that case especially pitiable. To bury one child in this year, and another in the next, is melancholy; but to bury them both in the same month, in the same week, is an uncommon calamity. Oh! how deep then must this two-edged sword pierce into the soul of Aaron, when both his children, his eldest children, the beginning

of his strength, the heirs of his honour and his family, were cut off together in the same hour, in the same moment. His soul seems to have been like the vessel of Saint Paul, falling, as it were, into a *place where two seas meet*².

SERM.
I.


2. It must be an aggravation of his sorrow that they were both come to years of maturity.

² Acts
xxvii. 41.

Alas! might he have said, if their cradle had been turned into their grave, it had been much more tolerable. Had these beautiful flowers been cut down in the bud, and withered before they opened³, I had not³ been so sensible of my loss: but to have had all the tender care of rearing them, and to see them now come up to years of manhood (for they must have been at least twenty-five before they could have been admitted even to the lowest service of common Levites according to the divine law⁴;) now, might he have said, now, when these years are approaching when I might have expected that they would have repaid my former tenderness; I am now in the decline of life (for he was then ninety years old), and I thought that these would have been the

³ Job xiv.
2.

⁴ Numb.
viii. 24.

SERM. I.  props of my age: but God has struck them both away. Who can wonder then if I feel? who can blame me if I complain?

3. It was a further afflicting circumstance that they had just entered upon the honour and service of the priestly office. Aaron and his sons were those whom God had chosen to draw nigh to him, and minister to him in his sanctuary. It was but a few days before their death that he had seen them solemnly presented before the Lord, sprinkled with the blood of sacrifice, clothed in the sacred vestments, and anointed with the holy oil. Perhaps he was then ready to think, Here is a blessed covenant of priesthood now established with my family; which is big with numberless benefits and favours. These children of mine, who stand so near to the Lord, will glorify him, and will be honoured by him. I shall see religion flourishing eminently in their souls: I shall often hear the praises of God sound upon their tongues; and, when I am called to the grave, they shall not only close my eyes, but shall stand up in my place. Nadab shall be the high priest when Aaron is no more. He shall approach even to the most holy place: shall have the nearest views of

God, and the nearest intercourse with him, that any mortal upon earth can be favoured with: or, if Nadab should die before me, Abihu, his brother, will surely succeed to his place and to mine. Thus does God delight to honour my family; and surely it is a pledge of further continued favours, that shall descend even to the meanest and remotest branch of it, which shall be blessed for the priest's sake. Fond, though probable hopes! What a dreadful surprise must it be to see them brought out dead in their priest's coats; as we are expressly told that *their kinsmen went near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp*⁵. Undoubtedly, the ⁵ Levit. x. higher the hopes of this pious father had ⁴ been raised, the higher would his sorrows arise upon so mournful an occasion.

4. It must be a still greater aggravation of his anguish to think that he lost them by a sudden stroke of Divine vengeance.

The more there is of Divine displeasure in any event, the deeper will it wound the heart of every saint. What then must Aaron feel on this sad occasion! Had they both fallen in battle, or had they both died together of some malignant and fatal distemper, it had

SERM. I. been a bitter cup, which, in that case, God might have put into his hand: but, oh! to lose them by fire from the Lord, which came out against them, and devoured them, how much more dreadful a fate! When Miriam, Moses' sister, was smitten with leprosy⁶, how did Moses compassionate her case, and how earnestly did he plead to God for her recovery! How much more terrible then was it to Aaron to have his sons not struck with common lightning, but with fire immediately proceeding from God. He might have been ready to say, *Had an enemy done it, I could more easily have borne it*: but that God, whose priest I am, should immediately arm himself against me and my family: that my own children, instead of presenting offerings, should themselves be sacrificed before him, how can I endure it? And, to add no more,

⁶ Numb.
xii. 13.

5. It must above all things aggravate his sorrow to think that they were cut off in the very act of sin, so that no space was given them to repent. Their crime was offering strange fire before the Lord (that is common fire, which is called strange, because it was different from what God had appointed; for we are expressly told that the fire of the Lord

fell on the first sacrifices which were offered to him in the sanctuary⁷. This fire it was the priest's duty to keep continually burning; and with this fire incense was to be offered. This he had not commanded; that is, this he had expressly forbidden⁸: and from the prohibition which immediately follows, verse 9, in which they are charged not to drink wine while they were ministering before God, it seems highly probable that these young priests had indulged themselves in drinking too freely, a scandalous fault in any, but much more in a priest: and so they boldly rushed into the presence of God when the hour of evening sacrifice was come, and they were to burn incense on the golden altar. They rushed in, thoughtless and fearless, as a horse rusheth into the battle: but, like him, they were struck with immediate death. The terrors of the Divine majesty were displayed; and his glittering sword entered into their hearts in the same moment that it dazzled their eyes; so that they were taken off in the very act of sin; without time or opportunity, for aught that appears to us, of asking God's pardon for their offence. Behold his awful severity! behold in what burning and

SERM.

I.

⁷ Levit. ix.
24.⁸ Exodus
xxx. 9.

SERM. I. bloody characters he wrote that important admonition, *I will be sanctified in all them that draw nigh unto me; and before all the people will I be glorified.* But, oh! my friends, how could the heart of a parent support such a stroke? Alas! might he have been ready to say, had God ordered them to die by the sword of human justice, and allowed a few days or hours between the sentence and the execution, though it might have appeared more infamous, yet it had been, on the whole, less dreadful: or, had he struck them with a burning fever or some other distemper, that should have brought them to the grave by slower degrees, the poor creatures might have had time to humble themselves before God, and to repent of their guilt. Then their souls might have been in a better posture for their appearance in his tremendous presence. But, oh! to be taken away with all their sins and follies on their heads; taken away even in the midst of debauchery and impiety, O my son Nadab! my son Abihu! *Would to God I had died for you, O my children, my children!* Nature, no doubt, would have taught Aaron such language as this: nay, perhaps, it would have taught him much

worse than this: perhaps it might have inclined him to say, Was the offence so great as to deserve such a punishment? Might not their youth have pleaded for them? Might not the disorder which their spirits were in have been admitted as some excuse, especially when it was no gross wickedness in itself which they committed? Had it been murder or rapine, it had been worthy of that avenging stroke: but when it was only an inadvertency, perhaps an instance of forgetfulness; at least, when it was only varying in one ceremony of worship, and taking one kind of fire instead of another, where there is no discernible difference between them, could this merit such terrible wrath? Thus might Satan and our own corrupt hearts have taught us to speak; but Aaron was better taught. Far from opening his mouth to charge God with injustice, he uttered not a word of complaint; but, as the Psalmist expresses it, he said, *I will take heed to my mouth, that I sin not with my tongue*⁹; and was dumb with silence. *He held his peace*, though his sorrow was undoubtedly stirred; and we meet with a calm of soul where we might have expected the fiercest tempest:

SERM.

I.

⁹ Psalm
xxxix. 1, 3.

SERM. *Aaron held his peace.* Give me leave now to
 I. show to you,

II. How much greater reasons Aaron had for that silent submission, which he here expressed, than for this complaint which might have seemed so natural on this mournful occasion: and here we may observe that some of these reasons were peculiar to Aaron, and others common to all good men. I shall only touch on the former, that I may a little more largely consider the latter.

1. There were some reasons of submission peculiar to the circumstances and the condition of Aaron. He was the high priest; and, as it is afterwards urged, the anointing oil was yet fresh upon him, and the days of his consecration were not entirely finished: for this cause he was not allowed so much as to appear in mourning, or to use any of the common expressions of sorrow, which, in other circumstances, had been highly decent. He was now considered as in an extraordinary manner the minister of God; and his concern with his Heavenly Master was greater than that which he could have with any, even the dearest of his earthly relations. We may

further add, that the hand of God was so evidently exerted in the present case, that to have mourned and repined would have been a direct insult upon the Divine Being. There were no second causes intervening, on which part of the blame might, with some appearance of decency, be laid. It was immediately the Lord, and an immediate message was sent to him from God, to silence any exposition on this head, *This is that which the Lord has spoken, &c.* But give me leave to wave these things, that I may a little more distinctly consider,

SERM.
I.

2. Those reasons for submission, which were in some considerable degree common to Aaron and to all good men.

And they are such as these. It was the act of a Sovereign Being that could not be controlled: of a just and wise Being, who does nothing which is either unrighteous or foolish: the act of a God who had approved himself gracious to him in many former instances; who had still continued to him many remaining comforts: and he might reasonably hope that even this affliction should on the whole be overruled to his advantage. I must only briefly touch on these things,

SERM. which would otherwise be a sufficient foundation for a considerable series of discourses.

I.

1. Aaron knew that he had to do with a Sovereign Being, whose determinations could not be controlled.

The God, by whose hand his sons died, was he that *does what he pleaseth in the armies of heaven*¹; and, among the inhabitants of the lower world, none can stay his hand, or call him to an account for any of his proceedings. *He takes away, and who can hinder him? or who can say unto him, what doest thou?* All the rage that Aaron could have entertained or expressed would only have tormented and exposed himself; and, as Sir William Temple* finely expresses it upon another occasion, all his complaints and his expostulations had only been like arrows shot up into the air at no mark, and for no end, but to fall down on his own head, and wound himself, instead of recovering or avenging his children. And this is a thought of some weight, though not of the greatest sweetness. It should universally teach us patience to bear the yoke which

¹ Psa. cxv.
3.

* Temp. Misc. vol. i.

we cannot shake off: since the more we struggle, the more we shall gall our necks with it. Therefore a heathen* says, O God, lead me whither thou wilt, and I will patiently follow thee; and I know that, whether I will or not, I must follow thee of force.

SERM.

I.

2. Aaron knew that God was too wise and too righteous a Being to do any thing which was unjust or unreasonable. Much might have been said against this dispensation: but, when it evidently appeared to have been the hand of God, more might be said to prove his general wisdom and equity than would have been sufficient to counterbalance the contrary reasons. The weakest and the worst of men would not be unjust, were it not from some view of advantage, by such conduct, to themselves: but the blessed God can have no such view of self-advantage. It can be no profit to him that he should oppress², ² Job x. 3. seeing that the infinite perfections of his nature set him above any dependence upon his creatures, or any of their circumstances; and consequently prove that it is impossible for him to be the better for any injury

* Epict. Ench. cap. 78.

SERM. which he can inflict. Besides, it is most

I.

evident that afflictions, brought upon guilty creatures, have justice in them, and that *a living man cannot complain, a man for the*

³ Lam. iii. *punishment of his sins*³. Alas! might Aaron say, my children are dead: but why am I alive? Have not I provoked God as well as they? It is but a few months ago since I foolishly complied with the wicked solicitation of the people, and made for them a golden idol. O my soul! humbly submit to this afflictive stroke; and wonder that it did not come in a more terrible form even than this. And thus did we accustom ourselves to think in general of the wisdom and the justice of the Divine Being, and, in particular, of our own offences against him, we should learn to justify God and to condemn ourselves; and never to murmur and repine under his rod: but rather to say with Micah, *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him*⁴.

⁴ Micah
vii. 9.

3. Aaron might further consider that the approved goodness of the Divine Being would have rendered any complaint very indecent.

He knew, in general, that *God was good*

to all, and that his tender mercies were over all his works. He particularly knew that he was good to him. Oh! might he have said, did not God give to me my life; and has he not preserved me thus long? Has he not led me on thus far in my journey, so that I have wanted no good thing? Was it not he who gave to me these children, whom he has now removed; and who gave to me those whom he has suffered still to continue with me? For, surely, might he say, I must acknowledge that *in judgment he has remembered mercy.* Eleazar and Ithamar might have been left to sin, and to die with Nadab and Abihu: but that they and I are yet alive; that we are honoured with the priesthood; that we enjoy so many peculiar favours, as well as the common happiness and dignity which we possess as Israelites, is owing to the rich and abundant goodness of God. *And shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil also?*⁵ Job ii. 10.

Thus, Christians! should you be looking round upon repeated, upon continuing mercies, to silence your complaints under afflictive providences. God can take away no more than he has given: but he has given a thousand

SERM.

I.

times more than he will ever take away. There is reason to hope that Aaron had now some view of better blessings above, which could never be lost. At least, it is certain that the Christian may justly indulge in such a view: but that leads me to add, that

4. Aaron might further reflect, on this occasion, that God could turn even this evil into good, and transform this heavy calamity into a mercy.

In many instances we know that it has been so; that *out of the eater has come forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness*; and why might it not be so in the present instance? I am afflicted, might Aaron say, but God is glorified; and, if he be *my Father and my God*, his glory ought to weigh much more with me than my own sorrow. I am afflicted: but Israel may be edified, and taught to fear the great and terrible name of the Lord God. Not only those who were witnesses of that sad stroke, but those also in distant nations and distant countries, who shall hear of it, may be taught to approach God with greater solemnity; and more diligently and cautiously to adhere to the institutions of his worship. And may not I learn

the same lesson? Will not this be an instruction to me, while I live, when I tread his courts, when I approach his altar, when I enter into that which *is within the veil*, to avoid whatever would provoke his tremendous wrath? and may not it likewise be the means of teaching me the vanity of this world, and of its dearest possessions? Perhaps I have been too proud and too fond of my children: God, by this stroke, may moderate my expectations from them, and my dependence upon them. Perhaps it may be the blessed means of bringing my soul nearer to God; of improving me in my meetness for that tabernacle above, of which this is no more than a shadow: for though my house be not inviolable with God, yet *hath he made with me an everlasting covenant; and this is all my salvation and all my desire*⁶. And if⁶ 2 Samuel xxiii. 5. the blessings of this be promoted, and, in consequence of it, my eternal happiness, welcome the will of God! welcome the death of my children, which may improve me for it! welcome my own death, when it shall bring me to it! And thus surely may the Christian say, especially when he knows that all his afflictions come through a Redeemer's hand,

SERM.

I.

SERM. I. and when the scriptures teach him to consider them as evidences of the Divine love; for *whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth; and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*⁷. For-bearing, however, to enlarge, I shall conclude all,

⁷ Heb. xii.

6.

III. With some brief inferences from what I have been delivering: and here,

1. See the force of the Divine grace to support the saint under his sorrows.

It taught Aaron to bear that heavy overwhelming affliction in the manner which we have now seen. Let us observe it; let us adore it; and let us depend upon it, and not be anxiously afraid of suffering, since it is possible, nay, it is what we may reasonably hope that as our day is, so shall our strength be. Perhaps had one told Aaron some time before that he should have met with such a trial, he would not have been able to believe that he could *hold his peace* under it. Thus can God carry us through hardships, of which we now hardly dare to think.

2. Let us humble ourselves before God, in that we have murmured and repined under afflictions, by no means comparable with those which were the lot of Aaron.

Let us produce the greatest sorrows of our lives; and set them against the calamity which we have been contemplating, and how small will they appear! One of you, perhaps, has been disappointed in his worldly circumstances: another has been afflicted with bodily illness: another has been censured unjustly; perhaps reviled and persecuted by his enemies, or treated unkindly by those who should have been his friends: another has lost some dear relative, perhaps a child, by a distemper or an accident: why, these are hard trials; but what are they to Aaron's affliction? Yet *Aaron held his peace*; when we, perhaps, have been ready to murmur and to charge God foolishly; and yet Aaron never enjoyed those peculiar advantages which are indulged to us. Aaron never received so clear a dispensation of *the covenant of grace*; or saw so bright a prospect of heavenly glory. Aaron beheld not an Incarnate Redeemer appearing as the *great high priest* and steward over the household of God; and bearing the bitterest sufferings for his people: bearing them with a resignation even superior to that of Aaron himself; saying, with a filial submission, *Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* *The*

SERM.

I.

SERM. *cup which my Father has given me, shall I not*
 I. *drink it?* Oh! what just matter of humiliation is it that when our advantages have been so much greater, our behaviour should often be so much less exemplary than that of this high priest of Israel!

3. Let us lay up the instruction of this pattern for our own future imitation.

Perhaps we are, some of us, even now under God's chastising rod; and, for the rest, we know not how soon the bitter cup may pass over to us. It is our duty, even while we are rejoicing, to remember *the days of darkness*, and to prepare for them. Let us learn, before affliction comes, to be silent, and submissively to bow before our Heavenly Father; and even to kiss the hand that smites us. Happy souls, that bear afflictions thus! What a sweetness mingles itself with these bitter ingredients, while they *yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness*; and what a rich revenue of glory will be produced by them on another day, so that the soul shall have infinite reason to say, *Lord, it is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes*. If you, Christians! desire to behave thus, let it be your care to establish

in your minds a firm persuasion, not only of the justice, but of the goodness of God; a sense of the evil of your own sins; and yet some comfortable evidence of your interest in God through a Redeemer. Be often surveying the examples of submission which are recorded in the book of God; and, when the trial comes, watch over the first risings of pride and of passion: fly to the throne of grace, and pour out your sorrows before God; that you may not utter any unbecoming accusation against him. Renew your application to the Spirit of grace for those sanctifying and supporting influences which are the life and strength of your souls; and endeavour to look through this cloud of tears and the mist of sorrows to that blessed world which is within the veil, where *all tears shall be wiped away from our eyes, and where sorrow and sighing shall flee away.* Amen.

SERM.

I.

SERMON II.

THE SEPULCHRE IN THE GARDEN.

 JOHN, xix. 41.

There was a garden, and in the garden a sepulchre.

SERM. II. THE instances of mortality are so deplorably multiplied around us, and we lose so many of our friends, that as among us it is hard to find room for new graves, so is it also difficult to find a variety of subjects for our discourses at their funerals, when the choice is not determined by the deceased or by their friends. I would desire at all times to search for matter not of curiosity, but of use ; and, especially at such solemn seasons as these, for something that may instruct ; something that may comfort ; something that may, if possible, turn the death of those whom we lament into some occasion of good to those who survive ; which to such benevolent spirits, as were many of

those who leave us, would be, if known, matter of additional joy, even in the regions of glory. And while my meditations have, as it were, been expatiating upon a variety of subjects, I have turned aside into this garden, and there espied a sepulchre; and I would now point it out to you as an object at once remarkable and useful: useful it may be, if God will fix our meditations properly upon it, and will influence our hearts by his Holy Spirit; else a sepulchre in a garden, the sepulchre of a friend, the sepulchre of a Saviour, will be viewed by us in vain.

You may easily know, from the situation of the text, that it refers to the tomb in which Christ was laid. When he had said, *It is finished*; and had, as we must all shortly do, *bowed the head, and given up the ghost*, we find that, though his most intimate friends had forsaken him and fled in the terror which seized them on his being first apprehended, they recovered their spirits in some measure; and were not guilty of so much baseness as to leave his body to be taken down with infamy from the cross, and thrown into any hole which might be made in Golgotha to receive it. This was probably the case

SERM.
II.

with regard to those who were crucified with him; and it might have been his, if Providence had not raised up those who were both able and willing to give to him not only a decent, but an honourable funeral. Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, an honourable senator, had the courage to profess a regard for him; and they easily obtained that permission from Pilate which possibly might have been refused to persons of inferior station, to take him down from the cross, and to inter him: and, accordingly, the former of them took care to convey him to his own sepulchre, agreeably to what has generally been taken to be the sense of that prophecy of Isaiah, that he should *make his grave with the rich in his death*. Concerning this place of burial, we are told that it was near the ground where he was crucified; that it was a *new sepulchre, wherein no man was ever laid before*; and that it was in a garden. It is the last of these circumstances alone which I shall point out as the subject of our present meditations: *There was a garden, and in the garden a sepulchre*.

It evidently appears, by some remains of antiquity which are come down to us, that it

was formerly usual to bury in fields or gardens. I will not take up such solemn moments as these with illustrations of such a point, which may be evident enough from the text itself; but I will only remind you of one remarkable instance of this, which we have in the history of Amon king of Judah; in which it is said that he was buried in his sepulchre in the garden of Uzza¹. This Uzza was his ancestor at the distance of six generations, and it is probable that most of the intermediate kings had been buried in the same place. Indeed it was natural to expect to find sepulchres chiefly built by the rich and great, as well as the most beautiful gardens in their possession; and it is the connexion of these two which appears to me particularly remarkable. My business this evening will be,

¹ 2 Kings
xxi. 26.

I. To inquire what might be the moral and religious reason which induced Joseph and others to build a sepulchre in a garden: and then,

II. I will lead you to some further improvement with respect to the particular sepulchre, which is here the subject of our notice.

SERM.

II.

I. I will inquire in general what might be the moral and religious reasons of building sepulchres in a garden. I will not now speak either of natural or of ceremonial reasons. There might be a natural reason which might lead them to think it proper to inter their dead in places exposed to the open air, rather than in the midst of their cities; lest fumes arising from a great number of corpses might, especially in such hot countries, be infectious and dangerous to the living; and, indeed, in very populous places this consideration deserves more attention than is often given to it. Yet it might seem less weighty in the case of those who could afford to embalm their friends in such a manner as to prevent putrefaction; and, no doubt, for some considerable time to make the corpse smell like a heap of perfume rather than to be disagreeable to the senses.

Ceremonial reasons might, perhaps, be thought of among the Jews, as, according to the tenour of the Mosaic law, no part of a human body could, after death, be touched without pollution. On this account it would have been most improper and intolerable to bury in or near to the temple; and it

might have exposed the worshippers to great danger of contracting ceremonial uncleanness, if burying places had lain in the necessary passage to their place of worship: a circumstance which, you know, our Lord particularly mentions, when he compares the Pharisees to *graves which appear not, and which men walk over, and are not aware*²; i. e. contract a pollution where they did not expect it. This might be a reason for making sepulchres in gardens: and it is highly probable that a nation, with whom architecture had attained to so great a height as it had among the Jews, might bestow many ornaments upon these mansions of the dead. Our Lord, indeed, seems to refer to this practice when he speaks of *building the sepulchres of the prophets*: and the author of the Maccabees mentions a magnificent tomb erected for one of the heroes of that family, the form of which is said to be still extant upon some of the Jewish coins. These edifices, intended more immediately to receive the dead, and to screen their remains from the danger of being dispersed in a manner disrespectful to them, and disagreeable and inconvenient to the living, became in part decorations of their

² Luke xi.
44.

SERM.
II.

gardens. But I conclude that it was not chiefly in this view that they were intended: very probably they might have respect to moral and religious purposes; and into these it is my present business to inquire. Now they might be designed to remind spectators in general of their mortality, in the midst of all their pleasures; and particularly to lead the proprietors of the gardens, in which they were, to recollect the memory of their deceased friends, and to think seriously of their own approaching dissolution.

1. They might be intended in general to remind any spectators of their mortality, and to mingle the thoughts of it with all the entertainments which a garden could afford.

Human nature is so formed as almost irresistibly to be delighted with the ornaments and furniture of a well adjusted garden. The products of vegetable nature, such is the apparent goodness of the God of it, give us a necessary and a very innocent and reasonable delight: and, therefore, when man was first created, we are told that *the Lord God planted a garden, and there he put the man whom he had formed*³. That, indeed, was a garden in which there was no sepulchre; no

³ Gen. ii.
8.

death, but that which lay hid under the fair form of the fruit of the forbidden tree, which for ever cut off the human race from the tree of life, and turned earth into a Golgotha. The art of making gardens, in succeeding ages, seems to have been a series of efforts, feeble indeed in comparison, and ineffectual, to restore at least a little image of paradise: and it is reported that many of the gardens of the eastern and southern parts of the world, which abound with numberless aromatic flowers and plants unknown to us, as well as with fruits of peculiar excellency, are, as may well be expected, exceedingly sumptuous: and these are the places in which persons, of distinguished circumstances in life, often pitched their pavilions in the summer time, and held their festivals; as we find Ahasuerus⁴ in particular did, who made a ⁴ Esther i. 5, 6.

SERM. and they drank royal wine in abundance in
 II. vessels of gold; and that this was according
 to the state of the king, who then vainly
 assumed the name of the king of kings. But
 persons of inferior rank had their feasts, as
 well as their walks, in their gardens. Now it
 seems that sepulchres were raised amidst these
 scenes of delight, that their masters might be
 reminded of death, and so taught moderation
 and temperance in their pleasures; as it is
 said that in the Egyptian feasts a human
 skull was served up in the first place for the
 very same purpose. Thus there broke forth,
 as it were, a voice from their sepulchres,
 which said to them, in the midst of all their
 delights, *Time is short; it remains, therefore,*
that those who rejoice be as though they rejoiced
not; and those who use the world and its pos-
sessions as not abusing it, for the fashion of this
 world passeth away⁵. Here, ye living, after
 your feasts, and your cups, and your garlands,
 after all your sweet and pleasant hours spent
 amid these delights, you must lie down here
 among us: after all the odours which are
 breathing around you, after all the beautiful
 objects which are now regaling your eyes, and
 the notes of music which are swelling on your

⁵ 1 Cor. vii.
 29, 30.

ear from the choristers of heaven that sing among the branches of these trees, to which you may perhaps add from human voices or instruments, to these dark and silent retreats must you come: *Your pomp must be brought down to the grave, and the sound of your viols: the worm must be spread under you, and the worm shall cover you*⁶. Perhaps for purposes ⁶ Isa. xiv. 2. like these there was a sepulchre in the garden; that the instruction of the house of mourning might mingle itself even with its highest festivities; and that *the living might lay it to heart*; and happy they who wisely attended to it!

Indeed, as Mr. Hervey has finely shown in his excellent 'Contemplations on a Flower Garden,' the natural ornaments of the garden themselves are so many lessons of mortality, if properly viewed. The fading glories of the lily, the tulip, and the rose, notwithstanding whatever there was of majesty and beauty, of elegance and fragrancy in them, too plainly delineate the frailty of human nature in all its lustre and glory. For *as for man his days are as grass, and as the flower of the field so he flourisheth: the grass withers, and the flower fades, and thus man comes up like a flower, and is cut down.* The voice of

SERM.

II.

God gave it in charge to the prophet to cry, to make an important and instructive proclamation in his name; and when he said, *What shall I cry?* this was the Divine oracle, *All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof,* its peculiar charms and glories, but *as the flower of the field*; yet frailer than the grass; *the grass withers, and the flower fades.* But the hand of the gardener, as if it envied us that instruction, soon removes the withered ruins, the bare stalks: the sepulchre conveys a more substantial and durable instruction; and it might not be merely an accidental result of its being planted in a garden.

2. The sepulchre might be intended to lead the family, to whom the garden belonged, to recollect the memory of their departed friends; and any peculiar instructive circumstances which might be connected with their descent into it.

It is natural for those, who have a garden at command, sometimes to take a lonely walk in it. The moments of solitude are pleasing, if a bad conscience do not make them uneasy; and for the eye in such moments to glance on the family sepulchre might be a circumstance full of peculiar instruction. It

would call up the memory of those interred there; and what man of common wisdom or humanity would wish to forget his dead relatives and friends? Thus might a lonely spectator sometimes reflect: "There lie my dear parents and my remoter ancestors; some of them, perhaps, remarkable for worthy characters and actions. Let me remember, with emulation, there lie the dear and venerable heads which were once filled with so many kind cares for my happiness; there the hands which reared me up in life with so great tenderness and solicitude, and placed so much of their own delight in their endeavours to secure mine. There," perhaps, might he say, "are my dear children interred, who, by what looks like an irregularity in nature (but in Providence there are no irregularities) are gone down to the grave before me: there are my blasted hopes, which so fondly flattered me that I should have sheltered my gray hairs under their spreading branches, and that they would have brought me a new race to dandle upon my knees: there, the dear infant, that just looked and smiled upon me, and then vanished from my sight; there, the children, that grew up to take a faster

SERM. hold of my heart, to shoot their spreading
 II. roots deeper into it, that it might be torn with
 so much the greater anguish when they were
 rooted up: and there those who were ripened
 into friends; sons, who were as plants grown
 up in their youth; daughters, who were as
 corner stones elegantly polished by the united
 hands of nature and art, and, perhaps, of
 grace too, into the similitude of a palace;
 but, alas! polished for the tomb.”

“There,” might another, or, perhaps, the
 same person add, “there lie my dear brethren
 and sisters. We were educated together, and
 our hearts were cemented in the bonds of
 early friendship: love gave us one interest
 and one soul; but now that sepulchre is all
 their inheritance: they were cut off in the
 prime of life; their family, their neighbours,
 their various friends were deprived of the
 comfort expected from them in the residue of
 their years. Their early virtues and their early
 services withered almost in the bud. There,
 perhaps, is lodged a friend to whom my
 heart and my house were open; and to
 whom, in token of our peculiar affection, I
 have assigned a place after death among my
 nearest relatives.” Such thoughts as these
 might, perhaps, often arise, and in some

cases a thought more piercing than any of these ; when God had separated those whom the most intimate relations in life had joined in the highest endearments which human nature can admit : but it is a case on which I fear to insist. The imagination is too painful to myself to permit of my presenting it more distinctly to those whose bosoms are bleeding, as it were, with a new wound ; and who have, perhaps, more to feel than they yet know how to conceive : when hearts have been in every respect one, excepting that they were lodged in two breasts.

Yet there are moments in which it gives a kind of mournful pleasure to converse with the dead ; to recollect their characters, their circumstances, the various instances which they had experienced of the vanity of life in its best estate, and the proofs which they became of that vanity. Who, indeed, would wish to forget his deceased relations, and to purchase, at the price of so much insensibility and ingratitude, a relief from the pain which the recollection, the instructive though mournful recollection of them, may sometimes give to him ?

3. The sepulchre in the garden might far-

SERM.

II.

ther be intended to remind the proprietor how soon he must himself be lodged in it, and resign all the rest of his possessions.

We read, in some instances, of persons building sepulchres for themselves. It is true, indeed, that none can promise themselves that they shall certainly be lodged in those which they have prepared. God threat-

⁷ Isa. xxiii.
16, 18.

ened Shebna⁷, when he had been hewing out a sepulchre on high, and graving a habitation for himself in a rock, that he should be violently tossed like a ball into a large country, and there die in infamy. And it is observable that, if tradition is to be credited, Joseph of Arimathea, who had hewn this out as his own, died in a very distant region, far from Jerusalem: some say, here in Britain, though I see no evidence of such a fact: but if he were afterwards a preacher of the gospel, it is highly probable that he might die somewhere in his travels to dispense it. There was, however, on the whole a probability that when a man built for himself a sepulchre, he might be interred in it: and it was something very instructive to have his own sepulchre before his eyes; to think, “Here the grave is ready for me; ready made to receive me; and, in

a little while, I must lie in one of these niches, hewn out to receive the corpses of those who are now living. My garden, however pleasant; my house, however magnificent; my estate, however considerable, must be left; left for this tomb, where I must lie insensible as the stones which compose it, as the rock out of which it is hewn. Here I must mingle with the dead: here I must *be gathered to my people*; yea, hither, perhaps, may I take my flight from the midst of my pleasures, as Eglon in *his summer parlour*. And, oh! how profitable might the reflection be if, from the insensible state of the body, contemplation rose to the state of the spirit, which was to be separated from it: and, indeed, it was chiefly to introduce and enforce this reflection that I proposed the subject. I shall, therefore, close my meditations upon it,

II. By leading you to some particular improvement of these things as they concern yourselves. And here let me desire you to apply to your own souls two reflections on this sepulchre in the garden, and on him whose sepulchre it was, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was for a little while interred in it.

SERM.

II.

1. Let me call your meditations to this as a sepulchre in a garden, in the view and the connexion which I have been representing. Let me press you to think on death amidst all your pleasures and pursuits: to reflect on the death of your friends; and to prepare for your own.

Let me call the meditations then of every one of you to the tomb. Though you may be young, though your friends may be numerous, though your circumstances may be easy, though your constitutions may be vigorous, I call you to the only certain object in this world which lies before you: bow down your thoughts to it, for God only knows how soon your persons may be so bowed down. In this flowery and cheerful time of the year, when all the country is as a garden, remember that many are dying in it; many funerals are carried out now, as well as at other seasons. Many who once were highest in the enjoyments of life are mouldering in the dust. Surely a human sepulchre is an instructive sight; and if it boasts any peculiar ornament, it only illustrates the vanity of those stones which have adorned it. Alas! what a change does it make in the strength and the beauty of

human nature ! How is all the pride of human glory changed in it, changed into a spectacle of horror, which it is well that the sepulchre consumes ! Let us learn humility ; let us learn to be more and more detached from this world, which we are so soon to leave ; from these ornaments and possessions which we are so soon to resign ; and let not our hearts be engrossed by the tenderest affections, founded on a union which must so soon be dissolved.

But is this all that we are to learn ? It is, indeed, what a sepulchre most directly and immediately teaches : but it is natural to think that the whole man is not lodged in this sepulchre. Here is the body, if it be yet a body, if it be yet distinguishable from that common dust into which it is mouldering so fast ; but, oh ! where is the soul ? No sepulchre can receive that. No, that is fled ; fled far beyond the boundaries of this world ; and my soul must soon fly ; and, oh ! whither must it fly ? Who will receive it ? what will become of it ? According to that prophetic warning of the prophet, so easily accommodated to the present case, *What will you do in the day of your visitation, when God shall*

SERM. *visit you, and you shall die ; in the day of your*
 II. *desolation, when it cometh?* that day of entire desolation, as to this world, when not one single earthly possession, not one single sublunary enjoyment shall remain? To whom will ye then flee for help, and where will you leave your glory? a reflection this which, if rightly entertained, would not spoil the pleasures of the most agreeable scenes of life ; but would render them more exalted, as well as more safe.

Oh! it is necessary to think of this immediately; and to enter deeply into the reflection, Whither will my spirit go? Will it then be in the garden of God? Will it be with Christ in that paradise into which death and sorrow shall enter no more? where all the pious dead live, and rejoice in having lost their earthly all, in having shaken off those bodies which were themselves as sepulchres, in which their noblest powers were so limited and confined that they might almost be said to be buried. Have I that glorious hope? and if I have not, how little do all my possessions here avail! how little my gardens of mortal delights, be they ever so spacious, ever so artfully laid out, ever so pleasantly planted!

What do they signify, when I must die, and leave them in their full bloom; and the frailest flower may outlive its master, and be cropped to dress his corpse! Oh, sirs! what shall I say, while yet my precarious breath and yours is in our nostrils? what shall I say to awaken you to a becoming concern about that great interest, in comparison of which every thing else is infinitely vainer than the most trifling flower that adorns a garden, when compared with the brightest gem which enriches a royal diadem? But, oh! the duration and worth of souls, when compared with earthly possessions, are not to be illustrated by comparisons like these. To impress you, if possible, with some sense of their importance, and farther to teach you the improvement of my subject, let me,

SERM.

II.

2. Lead your thoughts to the sepulchre of Christ; for it is to that, you know, that our text refers. How shall we bear to think or speak of death, of our own, or of our friends, if we do not connect the thought of Christ's with it? Let us then, while we have sepulchres and cells, while we have death and eternity in our view, seriously think, and think with a secret ecstasy of thought, that there is a

SERM.
II.

Saviour, if we have but hearts to lay hold upon him; if we can but be wise enough by the Divine grace to make him our own! There is a Saviour, who passed through a sepulchre himself, to accomplish our salvation; whose heart was so set upon our rescue and deliverance that he died to secure them; died, pouring out his soul in blood; and lay in a grave, in this new sepulchre, *in which never man before him lay*; and, by lying in it, has, as it were, left a perfume behind him that abates its horrors to his faithful followers.

Come, see the place where the Lord lay, that you may the less fear to lie in it. That you may have the less reason to fear, if you sincerely embrace him; that you may the less regret them *who sleep in him*, he is not indeed among the dead: he is no longer here in the sepulchre. Delightful thought, that he is not! He has risen, and left it; no more to dwell in such abasement. He has shaken off the dust of it for ever: as he says, *I am he that lives, though I was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore*: and, he adds, *I have the keys of death* and the unseen world. And, as he unlocks the gates of the invisible world to admit the spirits of his people to immediate

glory, so he will, ere long, unlock the sepulchre too, and raise his people to everlasting life and triumph. Then, when these gardens and sepulchres of earth are blended together in undistinguished ruin, and all vanish into smoke as useless things; then shall Jesus conduct all his people to eat of the fruit of the tree of life, that grows in the midst of the paradise of God, and to reign in life there where there shall be no more death. SERM.
II.

Let this blessed hope and prospect engage us all to commit our souls to Christ; and, while we sincerely desire and labour to be truly and eminently holy, let us rest on his righteousness, and blood, and grace, that we may have our share in his present care, and in the final triumphs which he has prepared for his people.

These hopes will support us amidst all these mournful scenes; will disarm the deaths of our friends, as well as our own; and will bear us cheerfully by their sepulchres to our own; though, instead of passing through a garden of delight, our way to it should be long and tedious, through a barren, and a gloomy, and a thorny wilderness.

SERMON III.

THE CHRISTIAN SILENT UNDER THE
HAND OF GOD.

[A Funeral Sermon.]

PSALM xxxix. 9.

I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.

SERM. **I BELIEVE** that there are few of us who have
 III. not frequently heard this Psalm read upon
 funeral occasions; and we must, no doubt, approve the propriety of the choice, as it contains some very weighty reflections on the mortality of human nature, expressed with great solemnity, and intermingled with proper devotional addresses to that great and awful Being who has in righteous judgment passed that sentence on sinful man, by which we and our friends are brought down to the dust: for it is he, as the Psalmist well expresses it (verse 5), who has *made our days as a hand's breadth, and our age as nothing before him*; so that *every man*, in his

best state, *is altogether vanity*. When the mind is agitated with strong affections, it is difficult to restrain the tongue from some undue liberty of speech: at least, there may be an inward language, audible to the ear of God, which may be displeasing to him, if there be not a care to impose silence upon every repining thought, as well as to *keep the mouth as with a bridle*. But it is the design of the providence of God, in conjunction with his ordinances, this day to teach us, whatever our trials may be, how dear soever the enjoyments which we may lose, and how heavy soever the burthen which we may bear, to be dumb with silence, after the example of the pious Psalmist, and not to open our mouths, because whatever it is that has fallen upon us, has come from the hand of God.

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III.

That we may make the more convenient approach to the instruction which these words suggest, and may be more properly and more powerfully impressed with it, I shall endeavour, by the Divine assistance,

I. Briefly to consider the circumstances of the Psalmist at the time to which they refer:

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III.

II. To represent his behaviour as here expressed :

III. To show how reasonable it is that we should behave in like manner under our afflictions, whatever they may be ; and,

IV. To hint some things as to the peculiar reasonableness of such a behaviour, when God has been pleased to take away from us our Christian friends.

I. I am to consider the circumstances of the Psalmist at the time to which these words refer.

And we may, in the general, be assured that they were very afflicting and calamitous. He was plainly under the stroke of God ; and it was so heavy that he was ready to sink under it : *Remove, he says, thy stroke away from me, for I am consumed with the blow of thine hand.* It extorted strong cries from him, and caused him to pour forth a flood of tears : *Hear my prayer, O Lord ! give ear unto my cry ; hold not thy peace at my tears.*

What the particular affliction was does not, I think, so plainly appear. What he

says of the beauty of *a man consuming like a moth under the Divine correction*, with the concluding prayer, *that he might be spared a little to recover his strength*, has led many to conclude that he had been under some painful and threatening illness: and if it were so, his case was the more deplorable; as it is plain that, instead of being surrounded with those kind and tender friends, whose fidelity and love are at such a time so peculiarly sweet and seasonable, he had some enemies about him, who were lying in wait for every opportunity of exposing and disgracing him; in reference to whom he declares, in the first verse, his determination to *keep his mouth as with a bridle, even while the wicked was before him*. It was a painful aggravation of all this distress that he was conscious to himself of many wanderings from God, which might give the enemy an occasion of speaking reproachfully of him. This is intimated in the eighth verse, *Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish*, that is, of the wicked; for, how wise soever sinners may esteem themselves and each other, you must be sensible that *foolish* is the epithet by which they are often spoken of in the word

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III.

SERM.
III.

of God ; so often, indeed, that the word fool has very seldom any other signification. This was the condition of David in the text : he was deeply afflicted, perhaps, with bodily disorder ; at least, we are sure that his mind was under a deep sense of sin ; and he was surrounded with enemies, who watched over him for evil, and would have been glad to have found any occasion of reflecting upon him, or of reflecting on religion in general upon his account.

II. Let us now consider his temper and behaviour as expressed in the words of the text ; *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it* : in which you will observe that he maintained a profound silence of soul, from a religious sense of the concern of Divine Providence in his affliction.

1. He maintained a profound silence of soul.

This is very emphatically expressed by the phrase of being *dumb*, and *not opening his mouth* ; or, as it is in a preceding verse, by being *dumb with silence*, which implies as entire a silence as if he had been dumb. It is a Hebrew manner of speaking, like that of

rejoicing with joy¹, for rejoicing greatly; or wondering with admiration², for being greatly astonished. Yea, it has been observed that even dumb men sometimes have a manner of uttering their breath, which, though inarticulate, is noisy; and therefore such an expression has its apparent weight and propriety, and may well express the great care which he took to avoid, not only murmuring speeches, but all secret discontent of soul; and every thing of that kind, though it should be whispered so softly, or disguised so artfully, that the ear of God alone should hear it. You will easily perceive that this dumbness was very consistent with pouring out the voice of prayer to God: that was his refuge, as you see in the twelfth verse; *Hear my prayer, O Lord*; and by that excellent petition in the fourth verse; *Lord, make me to know my end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am*: but it is opposed to any thing which might have been said with the tongue, or even conceived by the heart, expressive of any repining, of any rebellion, or any impatience of soul, upon account of this afflictive dispensation.

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III.

¹ Matt. ii.
10.

² Rev. xvii.
6.

SERM.
III.

2. This profound silence proceeded from a religious sense of the concern of Divine Providence in his affliction: *for thou didst it.*

I say, in his affliction: for, so far as his own transgressions and sins were concerned, you may be sure that he, like every good man, would be ready to acquit a holy God, and take all the shame to himself: *for God is not tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any; but every man is tempted when he is*

³ James i. *drawn aside by his own lusts and enticed*³.
13.

But it relates to his affliction, whatever it was: and here he speaks as one who was sensible that *the Almighty had afflicted him*⁴,

⁴ Ruth i. *as pious Naomi expresses it; and that there*
21.

was no penal evil in our cities or dwellings which the Lord has not done. Lord, if I have been afflicted in my person, thou hast done it: diseases, which waste our strength, and *cause our beauty to consume away like a moth fretting a garment*, are thy servants; and they execute thy will by methods frequently inexplicable by us. These are the scourges and chastisements which thy paternal wisdom has provided, to scourge the follies of the children of men, of thine own children. If I have been reviled, though, so

far as it was sin in my enemies, the guilt is theirs, yet am I sensible that there was the hand of thy Providence in permitting their hearts to be full of rancour against me; and in supplying them with the occasion and the encouragement, in consequence of which they have ventured to open their mouths so wide against me, while I have been cautiously keeping silence with regard to them, as well as to thee. In this sense God said to Shimei, Curse David. I own his hand, and submit to his justice. *I was dumb: I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.*

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III.

This was David's circumstance and conduct; and this the consideration whence it proceeded. Permit me now to proceed to what I chiefly intended,

III. To show how reasonable it is that we should behave thus under our afflictions, whatever they may be.

Now here I shall not confine myself to David's case, nor entirely to his views. I shall now speak of ourselves, as enlightened by the knowledge of the gospel, as under a clearer dispensation than that which David enjoyed. I shall consider and speak of our case as being

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planted in the house of our God, and watered with his ordinances; yea, as they who are this day, many of us, invited to his table. And here let the Christian reflect, Lord! thou canst do no wrong: and I am sure that I have great reason to be silent when I consider what thou hast done for me, in comparison with what thou mightest have done to me and with me; especially when I consider further what thou art doing, and what thou wilt hereafter do.

1. Let the Christian reflect that God can do no wrong to him, or to any of his creatures.

Let him not only consider the sovereignty of the Almighty's dominion, which is such that no creature can pretend to contend with him, but also the essential rectitude of his nature, which is such that none can have any right inwardly to censure, or to complain of what he does. "O my soul! he has done it, who holds the reins of universal empire. He, who *does what he pleases in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of earth*. He has done it, *who spake the creating word, and it was done*; he who is the potter, and every creature, on earth and in heaven, *but as clay*

in his hand, to be moulded according to his own will. And *shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?* Well may it be said in that connexion, *Nay, O man! who art thou that repliest against God? Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth; but woe unto him that strives with his Maker⁵!* This is a silencing thought: ⁵ Isa. xliv. 9. nor does it impose merely such a silence as proceeds from the dread of superior power, or the despair of being able to make any thing out by resisting it; but with the conviction of such sovereign authority and dominion is necessarily connected that also of infinite perfection. It cannot be good to the Almighty that he should oppress. Nothing can tempt Omnipotence in any instance to do evil. The infinite understanding of God must ever see what is right; his all perfect mind, seeing it, must approve it; and, approving it, must do it, being infinitely above all temptation to deviate from it. There is always reason to say, *Good is the word of the Lord that he has spoken*, for this very reason, because it is his word; because it is spoken by him. “O my perverse heart! what wouldst thou say? Wouldst thou dare to fly in the face of God

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himself? Wouldst thou dare to charge him with tyrannical administration? Wouldst thou dare to say, Lord, thou art now beginning to act unworthy of thyself: thou governest other beings wisely and well; but thou neglectest me, and availest thyself of thine irresistible power to overbear my rights, and to oppress me in judgment! God forbid! who would not rather say, *Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth*, before I utter such a word; yea, let my mind lose all its rational faculties rather than harbour such a thought!"

2. Let the Christian further recollect what God has done for him, as a reason why he should be silent under what God now does to him.

Were he only to consider himself as the creature of God, without attending to what is peculiar to him as being a Christian, he might see enough to silence his complaints. "Has not the blessed God given to me my being? such a being! with such noble powers and endowments as I possess! Has he not set me here at the head of this visible creation? in this spacious and magnificent palace, which he has raised for the human family, and furnished and adorned in this commodious, grand, and beautiful manner? Has he not

been the guardian of my infancy, and my childhood? and in riper years my guide and my benefactor in numberless instances? Has he not given to me all that I have; every comfort in life, personal or relative? When I look round about me upon all that I can call my treasure, my possession, does not every thing bear his name, as it were, inscribed upon it as the donor? *The gift of God.* May I not be reminded of his bounty by all that I possess; yea, by all that I lose, and all that I suffer? This member, which is the seat of pain or disease, did he not form it? and has he not given to me the easy and comfortable use of it during these many years, though he now lays his hand upon it? This friend, who is now laid in the grave, was she not a creature of his, whom he formed and gave to me; and in whom, perhaps, he blessed me for many years? and is such a friend and benefactor to be quarrelled with, because he sometimes resumes a little of what he has given?"

But this is not all. I am speaking to you now as Christians: and then consider how the account rises. "Has not God blessed me with the knowledge of his gospel, and of

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his Son? Has he not sent to me the tidings of grace and salvation by him? and has he not by his Holy Spirit made him dear and precious to my heart; and given to me some cheerful and comfortable hope of an interest in him as my Redeemer and my Saviour? And can there be matter of complaint against him when I consider this? Has not *his arm brought salvation* to my view? A salvation which he himself wrought out in so wonderful a manner? And ought not that consideration to reconcile me to every thing else which comes from so good a hand? to all his other doings?

3. Let the Christian recollect what God might have done with him, and to him, as a further reason for being silent under the afflicting of the Divine hand.

“The hand of God has now touched me and pained me. True! but it has not destroyed me. He has not, as Job expresses it, *let loose his hand against me, and cut me off*: and might he not have done that? He has taken away this and that comfort. True! but might he not have taken away all; and have stripped me quite naked and bare? yea, might he not have taken away my soul?

have destroyed my very existence? or, what would have been ten thousand times worse, have supported it only to make it miserable? God has *chastised me with rods*: but what are those *scorpions* with which he might have scourged me, and have been righteous in doing it! Hast thou not, O my soul! by numberless provocations, most righteously exposed thyself to his everlasting vengeance? What if thou hadst, even now, been in the abodes of the damned, surrounded with eternal darkness and despair! would he have been unjust in speaking, and unrighteous in judging thus? Be silent then, O my heart! before him; and let not God hear the lightest murmur: but rather let me fall down upon my knees, and adore his sovereign goodness that he has yet spared me; and, much more, that he gives me any hope that he will save me.”

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4. Let the Christian consider what God is now doing in a wider extent of the prospect than can arise merely from the view of any present affliction.

Thou, Lord, hast done this. Thou hast afflicted my body; thou hast disappointed my prospects; thou hast blasted my hopes;

SERM. III. thou hast slain my friends. But this is not all that thou art now doing: thou still continuest thy goodness to me; thou *causest thy sun to arise, and thy rain to descend upon me*; thou feedest and clothest me daily; thou sparest to me many dear and valuable friends, whom it were base and barbarous ingratitude to slight because some are taken away. Thou art still continuing to me the liberty of access to the throne of grace; encouraging and inviting me, if I have not this or that remaining comfort in the creature, to come to thee; to tell thee my sorrows and my complaints; to seek in thee what I have lost elsewhere, and more than I have lost. Yea, thou art continuing to me the liberty of thine house, and the privileges of thine ordinances. I am not banished from the solemn assembly by the violence of my enemies, who would gladly long ere this have introduced universal confusion and desolation, and *have burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land*. I am not his prisoner at home, as many of my Christian brethren are, in this land of liberty. Blessed be his name! I can come up to his house, as it is this day. Yea, he *spreads his own table for me*. As if all the blessings of

mine were not, as indeed they are not, sufficient, he sets before me the body and blood of his own Son; gives him to me as *the bread of life that comes down from heaven*. It is the blessing of this day and of this hour. And is this a day and hour in which to be complaining of him? as if it were not enough that I am here, unless it were with such and such a fellow creature; possessed of so much silver and gold; arrayed in such or such apparel; with such and such degrees of health and strength and spirits! Oh! surely it may be enough that I am here as a member of Christ, as a child of God! especially when with that is connected this further thought, as an heir of glory.” Which leads me to add,

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5. Let the Christian further consider what God will further and hereafter do for him, and it must surely silence him under whatever God has now done.

And if you ask, what? Let the Jewish Psalmist answer in these emphatical words, *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory*⁶. “Has God⁶ Ps. lxxiii. forsaken me, that I should murmur and complain? Is he now doing the last office of kindness and love that he ever intends? No;

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he will never leave me nor forsake me. This is still his language, *Fear not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God.* He will choose my inheritance for me. *He will watch over me for good, and cause all things to work together for my truest advantage.* He will subdue my iniquity; he will strengthen my graces; and, *having begun the good work in me, he will carry it on till the day of the Lord.* In a little while, perhaps, a very little, he will do what to an eye of sense indeed looks like a dreadful work, but to faith wears a most cheerful aspect. He will, by his Providence, say to me, as to Moses, *Go up and die.* But that act of his, which consigns this mortal sinful body to dust and worms, will be the most gracious act that he ever exerted since he regenerated my soul by the power of his Spirit. Then farewell to all my pains and my fears, my disappointments and my sorrows at once. Farewell, for a little while, to all my surviving friends; and welcome more perfect and glorious friends. Welcome the dear deceased Christians, over whom I have so often wept. Welcome, above all, the bosom of my Saviour, in which I also shall rest with

them. O abyss of joy and delight! and yet not all that I hope. The resurrection of the body shall complete the plan of my perfect happiness, with all the chosen in the everlasting enjoyment of God, of Christ, of one another, in forms of devotion and glory; of glory and felicity which *eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man*. And shall not all be taken well from a hand which will do all this? a hand which, even while it afflicts, has this great end of all in view, that *the light afflictions, which are but for a moment, may work out a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory.*"

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Whatever it may please God to work, there is something not only quieting but elevating in these considerations: something which may not only silence a Christian's complaint, but engage him to break out into a song of praise. But I would,

IV. Conclude with some hints as to the peculiar reasonableness of such a behaviour, when God is pleased to remove our Christian friends from us.

We are sure that it is what God has done; as he is the Sovereign Lord of life and death,

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who, when he pleaseth, *turns man to destruction*, who presides over all the minutest events, even the fall of a sparrow, and therefore much more over what is comparatively so much more important, as the removal of human spirits from one world to another; for he regards it as an important event, and plainly shows it when he says, by the Psalmist, *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints*. Let it, therefore, be considered that God has a peculiar right to dispose of them; that he does it for their infinite advantage; and that he consults the good of his surviving people in these dispensations of providence. Let this engage us to be dumb, and not to open our mouths for the purposes of complaint.

1. Let it be considered that God has a peculiar right to dispose of them as his own children and people.

And may he not do what he will with those who are so peculiarly his own? He chose them, and set them apart for himself: he not only at first formed their spirit within them, but new formed it by his special regenerating grace; so that they were his by a double birth, by a double creation. He pur-

chased them to himself *by the blood of his Son*; and they were his by solemn engagements; they solemnly committed themselves to him under that character, as their covenant God and father; and he received them, and owned them in a correspondent relation. They resigned themselves to his disposal; and he undertook to dispose of them for the best. And shall any one reply against this? I may allude to those words of the apostle; *If it be but a man's covenant, no man disannulleth it*⁷, and makes it of none effect: and shall we act as if we desired to take our friends and relatives out of the hand of that God who has confirmed his covenant with them, and they theirs with him?

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⁷ Gal. iii.
15.

2. Let it further be considered in this view, that God disposes of his people infinitely to their advantage, when he takes them out of our world by death.

Is it not indeed so? That voice which was heard from heaven, did it proclaim a falsehood? or was there any room to suspect it of doing so, when it said, *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord: yea, says the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works*

SERM. *follow them*⁸? Are they not, even now, while
 III. absent from the body, present with the Lord?
⁸Rev. xiv. Departing from us, did they not go to Christ?
 13. and is not that situation far better? Do we
 not assuredly believe that the prayer of Christ
 with respect to them is answered, that *they*
are with him where he is, and behold his glory?
 and do we think there is any thing that
 those eyes of theirs, which are now sealed in
 death, did behold while they were here upon
 earth, that is equal to, that is comparable
 with the glory of Christ? Surely then, with
 regard to them, there can be no ground for
 complaint; but rather cause to praise God.
 And let it be further remembered here,

3. That God consults the good of the survivors in these dispensations of his providence.

If it be a general truth that he chastens us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness, there is reason to be certain that this chastening, which I am sure is none of the least painful, has the same object and end. He intends by it to teach us the uncertainty of creature comforts; to call our hearts to himself; and

to that heavenly world to which our pious friends are removed, and which is in some degree enriched by their removal to it. He intends to quicken us to prepare for a change, which we must so soon expect; and to engage us to be with greater diligence followers of them who, through faith and patience, do now inherit the promises. Such as these are the purposes of God in these dispensations; and, if these purposes are answered, not only our departed friends, but we likewise, shall be gainers by their remove: for no consideration of secular convenience, no charms of creature converse, can equal the value of those spiritual improvements; of such an advance in the Divine life, and in a meetness for glory.

It is matter of joy that so many of us are now going to the table of the Lord. There, sirs, you may be assisted in forming your spirits to the temper, which I have recommended, by directing your eyes to a suffering Saviour, who *was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.* The more we view his example, the more we live upon his atonement and his righteousness, the

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greater peace and serenity shall we find in our own minds; and, of consequence, the better shall we be prepared for every trial to which God may call us out; and the more cheerful evidence shall we have that God is through him our covenant God and Father. Now, surely, if we consider him often in that view, our mourning will be changed into praise; and thus, upon the whole, shall we learn, by eating this bread, and by drinking this cup, to say with a more cheerful submission, as our Lord did just before the sufferings which we are going to celebrate, *The cup which my Heavenly Father has given me, shall I not drink it?*

SERMON IV.

THE LITTLE SUCCESS WHICH ATTENDED
THE PERSONAL MINISTRY OF CHRIST.

ISAIAH, xlix. 4.

*Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength
for naught.*

WERE these words to be considered merely as a complaint of the prophet Isaiah's, they would surely be very remarkable; and we might hear them at once with surprise and with grief. Sad indeed, that a messenger from God, a prophet, who spoke by his immediate inspiration, should speak in vain, though God had *called him from the womb, and made mention of his name from the bowels of his mother; though he had made his mouth like a sharp sword; though he had hid him in the hollow of his hand; though he had made him like a polished shaft which he had hidden in his quiver.* That all his sublime strains of eloquence should in a great measure be lost;

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and that the seals which God set to his mission, by verifying so many remarkable predictions, and especially that which related to the destruction of Sennacherib and the recovery of Hezekiah, should be disregarded by a mad and impious multitude, who would break through every restraint to rush on to the indulgence of their lusts, *stopping their ears to the voice of the charmer*, who charmed with such celestial wisdom.

But, my brethren, it is not only, or chiefly, in his own person that Isaiah speaks: the Spirit of the Lord spoke by him, and the Divine word was on his tongue. He speaks, indeed, in the name of the great Messiah, as is very apparent from many passages of the prophecy, and especially verse 7—10; so that the text leads us to reflect on the unsuccessful course of our Lord's ministry; to which some have thought that our prophet also refers when he speaks of *spreading out his hands all the day long unto a rebellious people*.

And we well know that the prediction was fulfilled when our blessed Redeemer came and sojourned for a while in human flesh. When he became subject to all the innocent infirmities of our nature, that he might speak

to us in our own language, and with all the advantage which mingled majesty and love could give, there was still room for him, as well as his servant, to say, *Who hath believed our report?* Accordingly he does actually complain, *I have spoken to you in my Father's name, and ye believe not: ye will not come to me, that ye might have life: I would have gathered you, and ye would not. He endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; and was set up, as holy Simeon foretold that he should be, for a sign to be spoken against.* SERM.
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This is a subject well worthy of a more accurate survey than we have, perhaps, ever given to it. It is pregnant with instruction to ministers and to private Christians; and that must be a cold heart indeed which continues untouched with what is to be adduced from it. I will,

I. Consider what circumstances may render it surprising that the ministry of Christ in the days of his flesh should have been unsuccessful: I will,

II. Mention some other circumstances by which so strange an event may in some measure be accounted for; and then I will,

III. Direct you to the improvement of the survey.

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Animate us, O God! with thy blessed Spirit, that the complaint of our Divine Master may not on this day be that of the unworthiest of his servants; the complaint of *having laboured in vain, and spent his strength for naught, and stretched out his hands all the day long to a disobedient and gainsaying people.* Blessed Jesus! indemnify thyself, as it were, for thine own disappointed attempts, when addressing thyself to the obstinate Jews, with some abundant fruits among sinners of the Gentiles, by going forth *conquering and to conquer!*

I. Let us consider some circumstances which may well render it surprising that the ministry of our blessed Redeemer should have been so unsuccessful in the days of his flesh.

Now here let us consider who he was; how he was introduced into his public work; the strain of his doctrine; the lustre of his example; the pomp of his miracles; and the beneficent design in which all centred: and we shall see in every one of these particulars, and much more in all of them together, a just cause of astonishment at the circumstances of which we are now to enter on the detail.

1. Let us consider who our blessed Lord was; and it will certainly raise our expectations high as to the probable success of his ministry. SERM.
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He was a person of the most illustrious and unequalled dignity. Had God sent down an angel into human flesh, and commissioned him to have made his appearance under the character of a public teacher, we should naturally have expected some great thing from his ministrations: but *behold a greater, not only than Moses or Solomon, but than Gabriel or Raphael, is here*; the Lord of angels; the Son of God; *the heir of all things; by whom all things were made, whether visible or invisible, not excepting thrones and dominions, principalities and powers.* He came, who *knew what was in man*; who could not but know our nature; because, though he condescended himself to wear it, he had originally constituted it. On which account he might be called the root, as well as the offspring, not only of David but of Adam too. It is the incarnate wisdom of God; his *Word, who in the beginning was with God, and himself was God*: and can he be unsuccessful? Cannot he that made the heart cause the sword

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of conviction to come nigh unto it? Surely, he could: and it is absolutely necessary that, to vindicate the credibility of the fact in any view, we should here lay it down as a principle, that our Lord waved that omnipotent energy which he had over men's minds, as he did that which he had over their bodies, when he permitted the violence of his enemies in the garden to have a short triumph over him: yet, allowing this, we may assure ourselves that the most prudent methods would be taken by him *in whom were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*: and it will remain just matter of everlasting astonishment that he, armed as he was with almighty power, should, for wise and benevolent reasons, permit himself to be, humanly speaking, frustrated in his attempts; so that *he, who fainteth not, neither is weary*, and who in his utmost effort hideth a part of his power, should speak as in the language of a feeble mortal, and say, *I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for naught*.

2. Our wonder will increase when we consider how our Lord was introduced.

It became the majesty of God, when he sent into the world so great and illustrious a person

as his only begotten Son, to raise a previous expectation of him: and accordingly he did raise such an expectation, that he was called, by those who knew something of the design, though they knew not him in whom it terminated, the ο ερχομενος, the person that was to come, or, as some would render it, the comer. Thus, when Philip would tell Nathanael that he had discovered the Messiah, he makes use of this periphrasis to describe him, *We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did speak*: and as his general character, so his person was marked out, not only by his miraculous conception, but by the circumstances of his birth, proclaimed, as you well know, to the shepherds by an angel, and celebrated by the songs of a whole celestial choir. The prophecy of Simeon and Anna, upon his presentation in the temple, had some considerable efficacy in exciting expectation; and the testimony of John the Baptist yet much more; of John, who was so extremely popular, that to him all Jerusalem, and Judea, and Galilee flocked, not excepting that *generation of vipers*, the Pharisees and Sadducees; not excepting even the publicans and soldiers. This illustrious pro-

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phet, of whom many doubted whether he were not the Messiah himself, laid down all his honours at the feet of Jesus; testified of him as *the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world*, and as so much his own superior in dignity that he readily confessed that he was not worthy *to stoop down and unloose the latchet of his shoes*. One would naturally have imagined that such circumstances of high introduction, humble as the form was in which the Messiah came, should have entitled him to more than mortal and human honours; and should have secured for the message which he had to deliver the most attentive and obedient regard; especially when we consider the visible descent of the Spirit upon him, and the voice which came from heaven, declaring, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*: circumstances which, though John only might see and hear, yet we know that he expressly testified; though he found so few ready in that most important respect to receive his testimony.

3. The strain of our blessed Lord's preaching increases our wonder in the degree in which the purposes of it were frustrated.

When he first opened his commission in the synagogue of Nazareth, we are told that the people, who, knowing the meanness of his education, might be the most likely to be prejudiced against him, wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And when the officers of the sanhedrim were sent to seize him, they returned quite ashamed and melted at his discourse; and cried out, as in an ecstasy, in the presence of his inveterate enemies, whom they knew to be thirsting for his blood, and these too the principal magistrates of their nation, *Never man spake like this man.* Nothing so plain, nothing so tender, nothing so awakening as the speaking of this Divine man; witness that awful denunciation, *I say unto you, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish: the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof:* witness those gentle invitations, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink, &c.* But all this familiarity, this tenderness, this solemnity, were in vain; and our Lord had reason to compare his own case, as well as that of the

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prophets, to that of children expostulating with their perverse companions, *We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented:* and this was the more aggravated, considering,

4. The lustre of his example.

If *they who sit in Moses' chair say and do not*, there is little reason to wonder that they are disregarded; and that while the hearer is saying in his own heart, *Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself also?* he slights the message, even while he is in his own conscience convinced that it is both right and important: in that circumstance to neglect it is great folly; but it is a folly not disarmed of every excuse. But what, O blessed Jesus! what had thy hearers to plead for their neglect, when thy whole conduct was one continual illustration of thy precepts? when thy whole life was showing how practicable, and how lovely they were? He could look round about on an assembly of his most inveterate enemies, and challenge them all to allege any thing which he had ever said or done that was amiss; *which of you convinceth me of sin?* He could look up to his Heavenly

Father, and appeal to his omniscience that he did always the things which pleased him. *Such a high priest did, indeed, become us, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners*: so that had his words been destitute of every other charm but truth, the veneration which the character of the preacher excited might reasonably have added an irresistible weight to them; especially when you consider them as enforced,

5. By the pomp of his miracles.

Imagine, my brethren, that you had seen the blessed Redeemer performing only one of them; saying to the impotent man, *Arise, take up thy bed, and walk*; or to the blind man, *Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, and thou shalt receive thy sight*; or to the ruler's daughter, when she lay a cold corpse, *Damsel, I say unto thee, arise*; or to Lazarus, when he had been four days dead, *Lazarus, come forth*: would you not have imagined that the Divine effect of these majestic words should have inclined every hearer to have attended with the most submissive regard to every other word that should proceed from his lips? and yet these miracles were not singular in their instance or in their kind. To these we are to add the storm silenced,

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the devils cast out, the leprosy cleansed, the deaf ear unstopped, the maimed hand and foot restored, and one or another of these works daily performed; multitudes of sick and infirm people brought also from all parts to the places where he preached; yea, himself going to preach the gospel in almost all parts of the country, undertaking three circuits within the compass of little more than two years, that he might carry the miracles of love and the word of salvation to their own doors, if they were too indolent to travel to Nazareth, Capernaum, or Bethsaida, to hear it; and to obtain healing for all their complaints.

6. The benevolent design, in which all centred, must also be the subject of our attention.

The kindness of our Lord's miracles was an evidence of this. Though the blasting of the figtree, and the permitting the legion of devils to drown the swine (which, by the way, was not the act of Christ, but of the great enemy of God and man) might easily have shown that he could have wrought wonders of terror, we never find that Jesus in any one instance occasioned either the death or the pain and calamity of any one person, though the wick-

edness of some of his enemies might not only have justified such a conduct ; but, perhaps, on the whole, have made it a work of mercy. Accordingly we find that his apostles, in a few instances, exerted their miraculous power for such awful purposes : but the Lord himself performed only miracles of compassion and goodness, and scattered everywhere blessings far more valuable than silver and gold ; blessings, to obtain which many who have now the greatest abundance of wealth would be glad to part with their stores, and would esteem themselves great gainers by the purchase. And this beneficence, which showed itself in his miracles, was manifest also in his preaching. So he expressly tells us that *the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost* ; and, in this view of his mission, *came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*. He came to recover fallen creatures to the enjoyment of God and of themselves ; to call them from attending to the dying trifles of mortality, that he might fix their eyes, their hopes, their pursuits upon a crown of eternal glory ; and might bring that crown within their reach. He came, that they,

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who were *destined like sheep to the slaughter, might have life; that they might have it more abundantly; that they might reign in life with him, triumphant over all their enemies, even over death, the last of them; and, when all his kindest attempts were fruitless, he wept over them, to think how happy they might have been, and how miserable they had made themselves: O Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thee! If thou hadst known the things which belong to thy peace!* Who can imagine what would then have been in the blessed consequences? But how strange is it that there should be any room for these tears! how astonishing that such efforts for their salvation and happiness should have been thus ungratefully rejected, thus obstinately overborne? such a salvation! from such a Saviour!

Recall it, sirs, again to your mind; and, if your prospect were to be bounded only to this part of the view, how different an effect should have been expected! such a person coming to them; so introduced; addressing them in such a manner; enforcing his divinely eloquent discourses with the lustre of such an example, with the glory of such miracles; in pursuance of a design in which their own,

their only, their eternal happiness was concerned. As a foreign writer expresses it, SERM.
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 “ So much care, so much love, so much earnestness, so many conclusive discourses; so many demonstrative proofs, so many exact characters, so many shining miracles, so much condescension, so much grandeur, so much humility, so much glory, so many different forms assumed, so many compassionate schemes pursued; what did it produce? One would have imagined that every sceptic should have been convinced; that every libertine should have been reclaimed: one would have imagined that the synagogue and the sanhedrim should have prostrated themselves together at his feet; that all the different sects should have united; that the proud Pharisee should have been humbled; that the unbelieving Sadducees should have been convinced; that the Essenes should have left their deserts and retreats, to have mingled themselves with the crowd of his disciples; and that the Herodians should have immediately renounced all their hopes of favour from that royal family, to which they were attached, to throw themselves at the feet of this king of Israel; yea, that those of

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the heathen who had dwelt among them, the Greeks or the Romans, the Scythians and Barbarians, if such there had been, should have yielded to evidence like this: and that to exalt God's *holy child Jesus*, whom he hath anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the people of Israel, should have been gathered together. But, O astonishing thought! of a truth they were gathered together for a contrary purpose: and not content with rejecting him, not content with deriding him, they united their efforts to destroy him: they prepared no crown for him but a crown of thorns: they raised him to no exaltation but that of the cross. So apparently, so dreadfully were the words of the prophet fulfilled, *I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for naught*, that if we ask our blessed Lord what are the rewards of his labours, he may point to the marks of his sufferings, and may say, *Behold my hands and my feet*; these marks I carry back to heaven for all the kindness which I have shown to men upon earth."

II. Let us now turn our minds to the contemplation of some circumstances by

which so strange an event may be accounted for.

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And here I have a number of thoughts breaking in upon me, which, if I should allow myself to expatiate on them, would furnish out several discourses; but I will only suggest these three considerations: the hearers of Christ were under many strong prejudices common to fallen creatures; and under some which were peculiar to their state as Jews; and God determined for wise, and, on the whole, benevolent reasons, to leave them to themselves, and not to interpose with that extraordinary energy of grace, to which even such prejudices must certainly have yielded.

1. The Jews were under many prejudices as men: they were then in a very dissolute state, as we learn by the sacred historians and by the testimony of Josephus; who says of this and the next generation of them, that they had attained to such abandoned heights of immorality and impiety, that he believed that, if the Romans had not come to destroy them, God would either have rained down fire and brimstone upon them; or the earth would have opened, and swallowed them up alive. Now, gracious as these words were

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that proceeded out of the mouth of our blessed Redeemer, they were not calculated to soothe men in their sins. No; he insisted on the necessity of repenting, and of *bringing forth works meet for repentance*: he beat down the empty hopes on which they had built, saying within themselves that *they had Abraham for their father*; and plainly told them that if they did the works of the devil, they proved themselves his children. He pronounced his blessing on *the poor in spirit*, on *the pure in heart*; and thus shocked their pride, and their avarice, and their sensuality: he preached the cutting off a right hand, and the plucking out a right eye, if they were the causes of offence; and his hearers replied, *It is a hard saying, who can bear it?* He preached the love of God and their neighbour: but they had not the love of God in them, and they were hateful to, and hating one another; foolish and abominable, and *to every good work reprobate*: and, therefore, free as that pardon was which he offered to them for all their past sins, as he would not himself become the minister of sin, these servants, these slaves of it, would not be reconciled to his doctrine. And hence, I doubt

not, hence the numberless instances in which he is rejected even at this day. Could we find out a scheme of accommodating matters between Christ and Belial, between righteousness and unrighteousness, between light and darkness; could we produce an authentic indulgence under the hands of our Master to any one favourite lust and iniquity, I doubt not but we should find multitudes reconciling themselves to his pretensions, who now are leaders in opposition to him; and who seek to strengthen their own misgiving hearts by the numbers which they join with them in the confederacy. But, besides this,

2. There were many strong prejudices peculiar to their state as Jews. I speak not merely of those which arose from the original constitution of their religion; but from the state unto which the teachers of it had brought it. The infallibility of their teachers was generally believed; and the high esteem in which the Scribes and Pharisees were held, joined to the severity with which our Lord reproved and exposed them, and the contempt with which they publicly treated his pretensions to be the Messiah, had, no doubt, a very fatal efficacy upon the minds of the people; as the notion of the perpetuity of

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the Jewish law, joined with some intimations which Christ gave of the abolition of it, would excite a further prejudice against him. But, perhaps, the greatest of all to be mentioned under this head, was that which was taken from those accounts of the Messiah which they had made the most familiar to their minds. Had they indeed impartially considered the scriptures, they would have found, as our Lord himself argues, that Christ was first to suffer, and so to enter upon his glory; but their sinful prejudices, which I mentioned before, fixed their eyes only upon those characters which suited their own carnal desires. The covetous Jews, for instance, would remember that oracle, *The silver is mine, the gold is mine; the kings of Tarshish and the isles shall bring presents:* and, when they heard Christ warning men *not to lay up treasures upon earth,* they would say, This cannot be the Christ, since he does not enrich his disciples. The fierce and the proud Jew, who longed to see Rome subdued, as Jerusalem had been, would remember that oracle, *I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession. He shall rule from sea to sea; all that dwell on earth shall bow down before him:* and,

when Jesus preached the blessedness of them who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, SERM.
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this Jew would say, This tame son of peace cannot be the Messiah. The luxurious Jew, who interpreted literally *the feast of fat things, full of marrow, and wine on the lees well refined; the perfume of the myrrh, and the aloes, and the cassia, out of the ivory palaces, with which he was to be made glad*, would not know the humble pilgrim of Nazareth, who *had not where to lay his head*; and who, when he made a miraculous feast for his followers, gave them barley bread, and multiplied a few small fishes: and, when the reproach of the cross came to be added to all the rest, we shall the less wonder if it were *to the Jews a stumbling block*, as well as *to the Greeks foolishness*. But we are to add that,

3. God had determined for wise, and, on the whole, benevolent reasons, to leave them to themselves; and not to interpose with that extraordinary energy of his grace to which even such prejudices must certainly have yielded. Now here I might mention a variety of particulars at which I must only hint, or I shall leave myself no time for the improvement, on which I have my heart much set.

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I must, therefore, leave it to your own reflections to consider how justly God punished their obstinate infidelity, in the midst of so many means of conviction and reformation, by giving them up to the obstinacy of their own hearts, and by withholding those more extraordinary communications of his Spirit, of which they had rendered themselves so very unworthy. It was, no doubt, intended for our admonition; that, seeing in their infidelity and consequent ruin such an awful instance of human depravity and of Divine severity, we might fear to imitate them in their obstinacy, lest we should share also in their misery: and finally, I might show at large that this was wisely adjusted in order to confirm our faith. I may say, in allusion to what our Lord said concerning the legion of angels, think you not that he could have darted a beam of conviction into their hearts, which should have caused them to go backward, and fall to the ground? in another sense, to have prostrated themselves before him in the humblest submission, and most joyful acceptance of the message of his grace? Could he not have transformed Annas and Caiaphas into believers and apostles, whose

fervent zeal in his service should have exceeded that of Peter or of Paul? yea, could he not have reformed the notions of the whole Jewish people, and have taught them to welcome him, under the form of a spiritual Messiah, with a thousand times greater joy than they would have welcomed one coming in his own name, and professing to answer all their carnal ideas and wishes? *But how then should the scripture have been fulfilled, that he should be despised and rejected?* even this very scripture, that *he should labour in vain, &c.*? Where had then been the accomplishment of all the prophecies relating to the infidelity and the consequent rejection of the Jews? Where that confirmation of our faith which arises from that extraordinary confusion in which, at present, they are scattered among all the nations, and yet preserved as a distinct people, persevering in a resolute attachment to the ceremonial of their religion, when they have lost all regard to the fundamental and most important moral precepts of it; attesting, to their own condemnation, the truth of the Old Testament, by which we demonstrate against them that the Messiah is come; and *that Jesus whom we preach to you*

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is he: and, leaving evident room for the accomplishment of the prophecies of their conversion and restoration in the latter day? It became the Divine majesty and goodness to appoint such a series of events; and, not, indeed, to necessitate the obstinacy and infidelity of the Jews, God forbid that we should utter a blasphemy like that! but to permit them to prevail, as the result of their own folly and wickedness, which he did not, by the last and greatest of miracles, interpose to overrule. I think that this may be enough to account for so strange a fact as the continued infidelity of the Jewish nation; and, therefore, I wave what I might easily offer further, to abate our wonder, from the part which mankind have acted under different dispensations before our Lord appeared; and from the unaccountable prejudices and perverseness with which men have conducted themselves ever since in cases where religion and immortality have been concerned. I will not, therefore, insist upon the monstrous corruption of Christianity and common sense by popery, which would somewhat illustrate this subject; nor upon the practical disregard which is still shown to Christ by those who most solemnly

profess to own his authority; any further than as the latter of these topics may be of use in the improvement to which I now proceed; regretting that I have so few moments to pursue a subject which would be so fruitful in profitable reflections.

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1. Let not ministers wonder if their labour be in vain when they hear their Divine Master uttering such a complaint as this. It is difficult to bring our lips to submit to that bitter cup which in this respect is often put into our hands. We are ready sometimes to grow impatient, and enter into a detail of our disappointments for the salvation of our hearers. "So many studious hours, so many fervent prayers, so many animated addresses on the sabbath day, and on week days; such artifice to catch you in the net of the gospel; such awful admonitions, such tender insinuations, such melting invitations in public and in private; our thoughts, our wishes, our tears employed in vain; and there is *none that repents of his wickedness*, and says, what have I done? *there is none that understandeth*, *there is none that seeketh after God*; there is none that cries out, *What shall I do to be saved?* Our lives are worn out; our constitu-

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tions are broken; we have spent the prime of our days to very little purpose. The summer is passed, the harvest is ended, and we are not saved: the bellows are burnt, and the lead is consumed in the fire; but this reprobate silver is not melted down. We look up and say, *How long, O Lord, holy and true!* we are ready to look round, and to cry out, *Hear now, ye rebels, must we bring water out of the rock?* But peace, O my soul, peace! did not Jesus say, *I have laboured in vain?* And *is the disciple above his Master?* O my soul! thou dost desire to see multitudes converted at once; to see a people born in a day: but when thou considerest his disappointed labours, his despised love, his words, his *tears poured out like water upon the earth;* be contented to labour all the day, though thou catch nothing; and be thankful, be joyful, if now and then God is giving to thee a soul; though it be but one in this month or this year, and another in the next. Though *I have spent my strength for naught and in vain, surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.*

2. Let us be humbled that Christ has had so much reason to complain with respect to

us, that the labour which he has bestowed upon us has been in vain.

We blame those obstinate Jews, who rejected the Son of God ; and certainly we have reason to blame them : but I sometimes fear that it is, as they blamed their fathers for killing the former prophets, while they were *filling the measure of their iniquity* ; as if they had built the tombs of the prophets, whom their fathers had slain, rather to perpetuate the memory of the execution which had been done upon them, than to honour their characters. Thus do many of us, I fear, say that *we would not have been partakers with the Jews in the contempt with which they treated Christ, and the slight which they put upon his ministry.* Oh, sirs ! Christ is still speaking to us by his servants, concerning whom he has said, *He that despiseth you despiseth me* ; and how is he regarded ? Were our Lord Jesus Christ to appear among you in person, might he not say to some of you, “ Sinner ! thou knowest that I have long warned thee of such and such evils. I have reprov’d thy covetousness, and thy passion, and thy pride, and thy drunkenness, and thy lying, and thy lewdness : but *I have laboured*

SERM. *in vain; I have spent my strength for naught:*
 IV. still you go on to profane my sabbath, and to break my precepts, as if you had heard nothing of me." He might say to others of you; "Sinners, I have invited you long to apply to me for pardon and life, to seek justification by my righteousness, and sanctification by my grace; but *I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for naught:* you still continue to neglect me." He might say to others; "Sirs, I have long invited you to my table: I have spread it in your sight, and have said, Eat, eat, O my friends, and drink abundantly; but *I have laboured in vain:* you neglect it from month to month, and you are ending the year with that neglect for which your heart smote you in the beginning of it." To a fourth sort he might say, "I have pressed upon you the care of the souls of others; I have urged you to set up the exercise of religion in your families, to take care for the instruction of your children, that they might be *brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;* but *I have laboured in vain:* you think this little trouble too much for my service, after all that I have done for the salvation of your souls." O sirs! let us

not deceive ourselves with vain words: we are *the disobedient and gainsaying people*, to whom, in one respect or another, Christ is stretching out his hand in vain. Let us humble ourselves at his feet. Let us set our souls to greater attention for the future, and say, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears.*

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3. Let us rejoice that the labour of Christ shall not be finally in vain; but that *he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.*

That, you know, is express matter of prophecy; and, blessed be God! it is in part fulfilled before your eyes. The words of Christ to his apostles were fulfilled: they did greater works than he; they were far more successful than he in his personal labours, when the gospel was opened in all its extent, and preached by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Even among the Jews, bad as they were, there *remained a remnant according to the election of grace*; and, adored be that grace! there is a remnant among us. The plan of Christ shall not be finally disappointed; and I trust that we shall, many of us, find that his gospel *is the power of God* to our own salvation. Cannot many of us say, "The obstinacy of our hearts has been sub-

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dued?" Cannot many of us look to him with that solemn appeal, *Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee?* This, wherever we see it, is the harvest sprung up from that seed which he sowed in the days of his flesh. We shall *be unto him for an everlasting name, that shall never be cut off.* He will acknowledge us in the great day as the blessed fruits of his toil and of his blood. "Oh! that we may all be in that blessed number. Let men censure and despise us at pleasure: let those, that reject and deride our Lord, despise and deride us: we will share his infamy, we will share his disappointment with patient fortitude; we shall share his glory in due time: and now we will go on resolutely and cheerfully under the united consolation of these two important thoughts, that *his labour is not vain* in us; and that *our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*"

SERMON V.

OF SEEING HIM THAT IS INVISIBLE.

HEBREWS, xi. 27.

He endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

THE apostle is here speaking of Moses, of whom God himself testified that he was a *servant faithful in all his house*. With the utmost reason does he afford him a large and conspicuous place among those worthies, *who through faith obtained a good report*: and happy indeed had Israel been if, through all its generations, it had copied the character of that legislator, of whose name they were so ready to boast. That effect of his faith, which is celebrated in the words of the text, was, that he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king. It is evident, from the first hearing of these words, that this cannot relate to his leaving Egypt, when he fled into the land of Midian, because we are expressly told that, Pharaoh seeking to slay

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him, he fled from his face. It is, therefore, much more reasonable to explain it of his leaving Egypt the last time, when he faced the haughty monarch, so highly exasperated, with such calm courage, when in proud rage threatening him with death if he saw his face any more: or, perhaps, it may particularly refer to his intrepidity at the Red Sea, when all the army of Israel, harassed as they were, were struck into consternation; and though he had reason especially to fear that Pharaoh would wreak all his malice and fury upon him, to whom the tyrant imagined the revolt of all the people to be owing, yet, though pent up as well as the rest by the sea before, and the mountains on each side, while the cruel enemy was pressing upon his rear, Moses, supported by this Divine principle of faith in the Almighty, speaks as if he had winds, and sea, and mountains at his command, and says to the trembling Israelites, *Stand still, and see the salvation of God.*

The apostle goes on to show on what principle it was that this servant of God braved all these dangers with such heroic courage and resolution: *he endured, as seeing him that is invisible*: he had a firm belief in the being and providence, the power and good-

ness of the blessed God; and this rendered him superior to any terror of man. The eye of the mind discovered to him the invisible God; and, in his presence, while acting by his command, he did not dare to fear. SERM.
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It will not be my business at present more particularly to survey the important fact to which the apostle refers; or to show to you how evidently Moses appears to have been animated by a high degree of faith in it; you cannot read the history, without seeing it in each of his words and actions: but I shall make four observations on the words of the text, and shall then conclude with the improvement of them.

I. I shall observe that the blessed God is an invisible Being;

II. That nevertheless there is a way by which he may be seen:

III. That the generality of mankind do not obtain this sight:

IV. That where the sight of God is obtained, it will prove a principle of the most heroic and exalted goodness. Oh that we may, by blessed experience, find that it is so! Oh that we may this day gain, and every day retain, such thoughts of God as shall produce such happy consequences!

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I. We observe that the blessed God is the great invisible Being. *Seeing him who is invisible.* This word implies the invisibility of God, and that he is of all invisible beings the most illustrious; so that he bears it as a kind of appropriate title, that he is the invisible; a title by which he may be known and distinguished from all other beings whatsoever.

1. He is invisible: our reason proves that he is so, and the word of God expressly testifies it.

Our reason proves that God is invisible; for we know by reason that nothing but what is material can be the object of our senses, and that God is immaterial, and therefore invisible. What is purely spiritual and immaterial cannot be the object of any of our senses. Our sensations are certain impressions made upon the corporeal part of our own frame; and we know that it is only matter which can in a proper manner strike upon matter; and that which renders any body visible is either its sending out rays of light from itself, or reflecting them when received from some other body. Now, though the rays of light are the purest material substance which we know, yet it is plain, by many philosophical experiments, that they are mate-

rial, and are the subject of several operations, particularly by the means of glasses, whereby they may be divided, or united, or compounded in such a manner as is impossible for an immaterial substance to be. On the other hand, we certainly know that the blessed God is an immaterial being. He is a spirit; and this by the light of nature evidently appears, not only from the natural arguments which prove the immateriality of the soul, and which prove it impossible that thought should arise from matter, whereas God is the great principle and origin of thought, but likewise from the immensity of the Divine Being, and from the distinction between the Creator and the creatures: for if the blessed God was material, he would fill space, and then it would be impossible that any other body should be there; and, consequently, that unless stones, and trees, and birds, and beasts were to be conceived as so many parts of the Deity, the Deity would necessarily be excluded from all places where bodies are: nor could bodies in that case be created by him; not only as by that creation he would exclude himself, but also as he, being himself infinite, and all addition to what is infinite, in the very first

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SERM. V. notion of it, being absurd, it would, in the nature of things, be impossible that there should be any other body in the universe.

But these are more abstruse and scholastic ideas, on which, though I have just touched upon them, you well know that it is not my way largely to insist. It is sufficient for us, knowing the Bible to be a Divine revelation, to know that it asserts the invisibility of the blessed God. Thus you know that it is said by our Lord himself, *No man hath seen God at any time*: and by the apostle, that he is called *the King eternal, immortal, and invisible*; and elsewhere, *who only has immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach*

¹ 1 Tim. i. 17. vi. 16. *unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see*¹.

And the only begotten of the Father is said ² Col. i. 15. to be *the image of the invisible God*²; and this was the doctrine of the Old Testament as well as of the New. It is true, indeed, that we often read of God's rendering himself visible to particular persons, and even to the whole nation of the Jews; but then, with relation to this, it is said that *they saw no manner of similitude*; and they were forbidden to make any visible thing as the symbol and representation of God: and, what is yet more

convincing, we there read of the Divine omnipresence, of his filling not only heaven, but earth with his presence. Now it is certain that the world is not filled with any visible form of the Deity; and therefore it is plain that what was seen was only some material appearance, by which God gave those who beheld it a token of his more extraordinary presence; and that it was not considered by them as the very essence and substance of God: from whence it will further appear that all those expressions which relate to the eye, the hands, the feet, the ear of the Lord, &c. are to be understood entirely in a figurative sense, as expressive of his power, his knowledge, and the like.

2. I might further observe here that God is spoken of as the invisible Being by way of eminence; not that he alone is in his own nature invisible: it is certain that there are many invisible spirits besides the blessed God. Angels are so, who wait upon the saints from time to time, ministering to the heirs of salvation. Human souls are invisible too. They go off at death, and remove to some different kind of world, yet no eye is so saga-

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cious as to discern them in their passage, even where a dying person is ever so carefully observed. Nay, indeed, there are many smaller and rarer bodies, which are invisible to our eyes; not to mention many minute things, both of the animal and vegetable kind, which the microscope makes visible, whereas they were before unseen. It is certain that the air is invisible; which, nevertheless, is plainly a body, producing sometimes such astonishing effects as no engine, which man can form, can by any means equal; and being, indeed, the great instrument of the more forcible impulses given by the discharge of all kinds of firearms. There are millions of invisible beings of one kind and another surrounding us; yet God is said to be by way of eminence *He that is invisible*; and this for two evident reasons, that there is nothing material and visible, which makes a part of his being, whereas, for any thing that we certainly know, though angels and human souls are invisible to us, yet there may always be some finer kind of substance in which they may inseparably dwell, and by which they

may be made visible to each other. This was plainly the doctrine of the Platonic philosophers; and, though I cannot assert it, there is nothing absurd and impossible in it: and I confess that I rather imagine it, as we are sure that Jesus Christ dwells in a human body; which body is, no doubt, visible to the blessed inhabitants of the heavenly world. And then God is called the invisible Being, because he is infinitely the greatest and most glorious of them all; and that Being with whom we are infinitely more concerned than with any or with all the rest. *Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord? who is like to him among the gods, the God with whom we have to do³?* And, indeed, I might show at large that our intercourse with, and concern in other beings is chiefly as they are referred to him, and as they may be the means of leading us nearer to him, and of aiding our converse with him.

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³ Psalm
lxxxvi. 8.
lxxxviii. 6.

II. Nevertheless there is a way by which this invisible God may be seen.

So we are told concerning Moses, *he endured, as seeing him who is invisible*: he acted as one that saw God. Now there are in the

SERM. V. word of God two respects in which God may be said to be seen by his creatures; in the one of which it is the privilege, in the other the character of good men to see him; their peculiar privilege, their appropriated character. We will bestow a word or two upon each of these modes of seeing God.

1. To see God sometimes signifies to enjoy him, and in that respect it is the good man's happiness, and the highest happiness which the creature can obtain; as what can sound so much like happiness as the enjoying of the Creator, the great, blessed, eternal God? Now this is promised to every true Christian: oh that we might each of us attain it! promised by God himself: *Blessed are the pure*
⁴ Matt. v. *in heart, for they shall see God*⁴: and Job
^{8.} had a joyful prospect of it, *Whom my eyes*
⁵ Job xix. *shall see, and not another for me*⁵.

^{27.} 2. It sometimes signifies to have a realizing apprehension of the Divine presence by faith; and in this sense it is the character of a good man, and of Moses in the text. So Job, when God answered him out of the whirlwind, though there was no corporeal appearance, and represented the Divine perfections and glory in such a manner that he was

powerfully impressed with them, cries out, *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear ; but now mine eye seeth thee*⁶. And so Hagar, when affected with a discovery of the Divine providential care, called the name of the place Beer-lahai-roi ; *for here*, says she, *I have looked after him that seeth me*, or, I have, as it were, fixed the eye of my soul upon him ; and David expresses the same idea sometimes by having his *eyes ever towards the Lord*, and sometimes *by setting the Lord always before him*⁷ : and happy are the souls that can appeal to Him who sees their hearts, that this is their temper and their care. But is this happiness universal ? Would to God that it were ! The contrary is too plainly implied in the words of the text ; and leads us to observe,

III. That the generality of men do not obtain and preserve this sight. For you see that this is spoken of as an extraordinary thing in Moses, and productive of a very extraordinary character in him, that he saw *him who is invisible*. Now this seems a matter worthy of great notice ; that when such a God is always and necessarily present with

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6 Job xlii.
5.

7 Psa. xxv.
15. xvi. 8.

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 men, giving them so many tokens of his perfections, and so many proofs and instances of his kindness, and his care of them, they should be so little sensible of it. Give me leave, therefore, a little to prove this; that the mind, being more convinced of the fact, may be the more impressed with it. Now this appears if we consider how many there are that take no notice at all of him, and how many are not afraid to provoke him to his face.

1. There are many in the world that take no notice of God at all. Therefore they are said to *be without God in the world*⁸: and, as another sacred author speaks, *God is not in all their thoughts*⁹: yea, they do, as it were, say unto God, *Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*¹. No; they act as if they thought it beneath them to take any notice of God, and to hold any converse with him. *The wicked*, through the pride of his countenance, as it is said in the preceding text, *will not seek after God*. And let me beseech you to ask your own consciences whether this may not be said of some of you. I am afraid that it may. Now can it be imagined that a man sees God, that he has

⁸ Eph. ii. 12.

⁹ Psa. x. 4.

¹ Job xxi. 14.

any affecting sight of him, when he will not take any notice of him; will not hold any converse with him; will not speak a word to him; will not ask a favour from his hand, or thank him for what he receives from his bounty; but, when some serious and solemn thought of God is, perhaps, suggested to his mind, will turn away from it, and that even when he is, perhaps, in the very house of God? Does that man see God, who sets himself to sleep when he should be presenting his petitions to him, and hearing his word; or who is, perhaps, whispering and laughing when he should be singing his praise? Why, this is just such conduct as might be expected from a man who imagined that he was in a place where God was not; or where God could not see and observe his conduct. Oh! it is too plain, from men's omission of Divine worship, from their trifling in it, that they see not God, nor take any notice of him.

2. There are many who are not afraid to provoke God to his face; and surely these do not see him. When I speak of provoking God to his face, I use a phrase which the scripture teaches us: *I have spread out my*

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SERM. *hands all the day unto a rebellious people,*
 V. *which walketh in a way that is not good, after*
their own thoughts; a people that provoketh
²Isaiah *me to anger continually to my face*². And
 lxv. 2. many such there are whose life is one con-
 tinued provocation of the Majesty of heaven,
 as if they would make the experiment how
 much he would bear. They know his laws,
 and they pass for nothing with them; they
 would not commit this or that wickedness
 before man, before a judge; nay, perhaps,
 they would not commit it before a child;
 but they will commit it before the blessed
 God: and can we imagine that they see him?
 that they have then a proper and steady per-
 suasion that God, with all his power and all
 his holiness, is there? What! do they think
 themselves his superiors? Do they suppose
 that they can overbear his omnipotence?
 One would imagine that they thought so;
 as the apostle expresses it when he says, *Do*
we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we
³ 1 Cor. x. *stronger than he*³? Observe how this mad-
 22. ness is represented by Eliphaz, when he
 speaks of the proud haughty sinner: *He*
stretcheth out his hand against God, and
strengtheneth himself against the Almighty:

*he runs upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his buckler*⁴. The Almighty is represented like an armed warrior; and the sinner is represented as running against him. Do these wretches, think you, see God? Do they know what an enemy they charge and challenge? Oh! if they did, they would fall down before him in tears and in trembling, and sue to him for their lives. Accordingly, if God gives a poor creature, as it were, but one glance of himself; if he flashes but one ray, as it were, from his majestic countenance upon him, his heart presently sinks; his hands fall down disabled; and he cries out like one who is undone. And if God pleases to shine forth in the mild beams of his love and mercy, and by his Holy Spirit to clear up the sight of this poor, rash, rebellious creature, his heart is subdued; he loves the God whom he was before making war against; and would, as it were, not only put off his armour of rebellion, but all his most boasted ornaments, that he might reflect a few of those rays, and wear a little of that resemblance which appears so beautiful and so delightful; and this I am to show in the next place:

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⁴ Job xv.
25, 26.

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IV. That where a sight of God is maintained in the soul, it will prove a principle of the most heroic and exalted goodness.

This is, if I may so speak, that which made a Moses. This is that which fired his zeal, and strengthened his patience, and fitted him for all that he did and bore in God's service. He *saw him that is invisible*; and I would fain make you sensible of this: that to see this invisible God would be attended with noble consequences. Particularly it would preserve us from sin, it would animate our devotions, it would dispose us to all kind actions to our fellow creatures, and would arm the mind with courage to endure the greatest difficulties and hardships.

1. A believing sight of God, for of that we now speak, would have a most powerful tendency to preserve us from sin.

We live in a world of temptations, and our natures are frail and feeble: this consideration is therefore important. So you know that it wrought upon Joseph, when his mistress solicited him with her unlawful love: *How, says he, shall I do this great wickedness,*

*and sin against God*⁵? How secret soever the scene of the iniquity might be, he knew that

⁵ Genesis
xxxix. 9.

God could not be excluded from it; and in his sight he could not bear to act in such an indecent, unjust, ungrateful manner. One realizing view of the blessed God would disarm ten thousand temptations. Those things that look great, as in his absence, would vanish into nothing in his presence; and it is worthy of our notice that this is a universal preservative. It relates not only to this or to that particular sin, but to all: yea, it extends to the first motion and tendency towards sin in the soul; for it is natural to reflect, “What if my external behaviour be irreproachable, yet if my heart be polluted with sinful desires, and affections, and purposes, will not the heart-searching God be offended at it? Can it be concealed from him? or, if he sees it, will he be reconciled to it? nay, will he not rather look upon it as a peculiar indignity offered to his blessed self that, when I am careful of my character as to others, and unwilling to offend them, I should make nothing at all of his favour; that I should make so bold with him?” This thought would have a great influence; and then it would be the more efficacious, as it is of so noble a nature, and would teach us to be subject, *not*

SERM. V. *only for wrath, but, as it were, for conscience sake*; out of conscientious reverence for so great and illustrious a Being, and out of gratitude too, when we consider his paternal kindness and goodness. Oh that you would be persuaded to try in the ensuing week what the believing view of God would do towards keeping you from sin! and I believe that it would prove one of the most innocent weeks in your life; and, I may add, one of the most devout and useful too: for,

2. This believing sight of God will surely animate our devotion.

The Jewish ritual was exceedingly splendid, and there was a great deal in it which struck the senses in a very powerful manner. The Christian worship is, especially among us, conducted with the greatest simplicity; there is very little in it to strike the eye or the ear; but if we look through these forms to an invisible God, it will strike the heart. When we see him, as it were, with all his infinite perfections and glories about him, *clothing himself with light as with a garment, arrayed with honour and majesty*, we shall, like Moses, when he saw the back parts of the King of Israel, hasten, and bow ourselves down with

our faces towards the earth. The believing sight of God will put humility into our confessions, ardent desire into our petitions, and affectionate gratitude into our praises. It will fill us with humility, abasement, and love. *I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, says the father of the faithful, who am but dust and ashes*⁶. *My eye sees thee, says Job, therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes*⁷. “Lord! what am I amidst thy works? what am I in thy presence? Does the Lord look upon me? May I be allowed to utter one word before thee? May I be allowed to do it; and shall I neglect to do it? Shall I live without speaking to this great and glorious God, who is ever with me? or shall I speak in a hypocritical, in a formal, and in a cold manner? Oh that I could pour out all my soul in every word which I utter! Oh that I could unite all its powers in one fervent act! Oh that I had capacity to praise thee as thou art praised in heaven! to love thee with as great ardour and as strong emotion as the brightest seraph does there! Gladly would I vie with them, O holy, holy, holy Lord God, in celebrating thy magnificent and glorious name!”

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⁶ Genesis xviii. 27.

⁷ Job xlii. 6.

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3. The believing sight of God will quicken us to benevolent affections.

When we view God, we view him not only as light, but as love; as the Father of the universe, dispensing blessings on every side of him. And we know that it is his will that his rational creatures should love one another, and make each other as happy as they can; therefore, both in obedience to his will, and in imitation of his example, when we thus look upon him, we shall find our souls inflamed with a desire to do good. *He that loves not his brother, whom he hath seen, how shall he love God, whom he hath not seen?* It is natural for the soul to say, “Do I stand here in the presence of this good God, and does he even now look into my heart? Oh, let him see, as it were, his own image reflected from thence! let him behold a creature who, according to his narrow capacity, would fain pursue the end which his Creator and great Benefactor pursues!”

Methinks it would be an agreeable illustration of this to think of a Christian viewing, as it were, on the one hand, his Heavenly Father, and on the other his necessitous brother, and saying with himself, “Whence

came it to pass that there should be such an object, an indigent man, an indigent Christian in the presence of an Almighty God? Is not the residue of the Spirit and the fulness of power and glory with him? Could he not have provided effectually for the supply of all his creatures, and have taken care that there should be no painful necessity? Why then is this permitted, but that there might be the exercise of graces proper to these different states? that my poor brother might exercise humble submission and holy dependence; and that I, enriched as I am by my Father's bounty, might apply some of it to this good purpose, and so have the pleasure of relieving." As we sometimes give our children a little stock in their hands, to see how they will use it, and are pleased with what they do in the way of charity; a heart, that sees how God opens his hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing, will find an incentive to beneficence and usefulness in every thing which he sees about him. The birds of the air teach it; the beasts of the field proclaim it; the trees of the forest, the grain, and the very flowers of the earth, at the same time that they declare the pre-

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SERM. V. sence of God, declare his bounty, and call upon us to *be merciful* and liberal *as our Heavenly Father is*. And nothing will appear the object of so noble an ambition as to be approved by this benevolent Being. Though it is beneath a Christian to do his alms to be seen of men, we are allowed, we are required to maintain a regard to that *God who sees in secret*, and whom we in secret may see.

4. This believing sight of God will arm the mind to a courageous endurance of the greatest difficulties and hardships which we can meet in the way of our duty.

Various instances of this occur in scripture; and it is reasonable to believe that it should produce such an effect. David met Goliath as in the name and presence of God, and defied the danger at which an army trembled. The three worthies considered themselves as in the presence of God, and were not careful to answer that tyrant who threatened them with a fiery furnace, heated before their eyes. Yea, our Lord is represented as saying, *I have set my face like a flint; he is near*. And pardon me that to this illustrious instance I add one with which I have been much affected,

though it be not recorded in the canonical scriptures; I mean the account of the martyrdom of those heroic children in the Maccabees, to whom the apostle refers when he says that *they were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection*. We are told in the most ancient account of that fact, that when the tyrant had seized the first of the seven sons, and cut out his tongue, and cut off his hands and his feet, his mother and brethren exhorted him and each other to die courageously, saying, *The Lord God looks upon us, and in truth has comfort in us, as Moses in his song declared, saying, he shall be comforted concerning his servants*⁸. The sentiment is sublime; though, perhaps, the application of the text was not made with critical exactness: The eye of God, ever present and now near us, beholds no spectacle with more delight than his servants voluntarily suffering for the truth. Let us exhibit to him that grateful spectacle!

And what can be more reasonable? Does the sight and presence of a general inspire his soldiers with courage; and shall not the presence of God inspire me with heroic sentiments? Shall God see me turn my back

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⁸ 2 Macc.
vii. 6.

SERM. V. upon the enemy? Dare we retreat when God looks on? Let me be faithful to death, since he is present who can give to me a crown of life! To this view the subject directly leads; and it may evidently be applied to any thing of hazard in circumstances not altogether so desperate, as was the case with Moses before Pharaoh, and at the Red Sea.

I should now proceed to the improvement, for which I am sorry that I have left myself so little time.

1. Let us now direct the eye of our minds to that invisible God in whose presence we are, and of whose glory we have been hearing. Let us not leave the place without acting upon this admonition which we have received. "Blessed God! we know that thou art near, not far from any one of us, since in thee *we live, move, and exist*. Especially art thou here in the assembly of thy saints. We bow our souls before thee; we consider thine incomparable majesty and glory; we rejoice in thy presence, that thou canst not be separated from us. We pray that we may never forget thee; that thou wilt remind us at all times of thy blessed

self; and wilt put suitable apprehensions and affections into our hearts according to the different circumstances in which we are. Oh! direct the eyes of our minds to thee, the great Father of light; and direct our hearts unto the love of God, and the patient waiting for Jesus Christ!

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2. Let us lament it that there are so few in the world who see God.

Whence can this come to pass, when the world itself is not more apparent than the being and glory of the great Creator? *The invisible things of God are clearly seen*⁹, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and godhead. *The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge*¹. What, shall we then say that men overlook him who is near to us, him who is within us? What! but that a fatal blindness has spread over the human race, over all souls that are not enlightened by the influence of Divine grace. *They grope as in noonday*, as the sacred writer expresses it. Not to see God! Oh! how much better were it not to see the

⁹ Rom. i.
20.

¹ Psa. xix.
1, 2.

SERM. ^{v.} sun! how much better to have been as an untimely birth, as infants which never saw light!

But he must be seen at last; seen then, *when the spirit returns to God who gave it. I shall behold him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not near.* Unhappy creatures! who will not now direct your eyes to the invisible God, you shall behold him at last to your everlasting confusion; shall at once see the glory of his majesty, and feel the weight of his avenging hand.

3. Let us labour to retain a more constant sight of God for the time to come than we have ever yet had.

Surely the tendency that it has to promote those blessed ends which we have mentioned must be instead of ten thousand arguments to engage us to it; and yet we sadly neglect it. Let us, by the grace of God, endeavour to correct this great evil; and, for this purpose, if my time would allow me, I would give you some important advices; that you should endeavour to obtain a firm and rational persuasion of the existence, providence, and presence of God; that you should

viéw him in the light in which the gospel of his Son has placed him; that you should labour to secure an interest in him through Christ; that you should guard against all undue attachment to things which are visible; that you should frequently and solemnly be thinking of the invisible world; that you should set yourselves often to think of him, and speak to him; and that you should make it a most earnest request that he would raise you to himself by his Holy Spirit; and so make it more easy and habitual to your souls to think of him, to speak to him, and to live with him.

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SERMON VI.

OF SEEING HIM THAT IS INVISIBLE.

PART II.

HEBREWS, xi. 27.

He endured, as seeing him that is invisible.

SERM. VI. WHEN I entered upon this subject, I fully designed to have finished it on one Lord's Day: but when I came to reflect upon it, I found such a variety of matter opening upon me that I could not abide by that purpose; and, particularly, when I came to the application, it seemed that many thoughts were suggested which it might be very useful to insist upon more copiously: and, accordingly, I beg leave to resume them. I have told you already that God is a great invisible Being; that, nevertheless, though invisible, there is a way by which he may be seen, yet that many do not obtain the sight of him; but, that where it is obtained, it is a principle of

universal and exalted goodness. We then proceeded to the improvement; and, after having exhorted you to adore the invisible God as if actually present, and to implore him to fix a sense of himself, of his perfections and glories upon your minds, we were forced upon two other reflections: How lamentable a thing it is that the blessed God be no more seen, and how solicitous we should be for the future to retain more frequent and affectionate thoughts of God. These two topics I shall resume to-day, and shall treat them, not as particulars in the order in which they stood before, but as general heads; and shall,

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I. Endeavour to show how lamentable a thing it is that God is not more seen:

II. Propose and illustrate at large such advices as have the happiest tendency toward maintaining such a sight. Oh that God may make the remonstrances under the former head of use to awaken some, and the directions under the latter a means of guiding many, very many, to a better and happier temper! Oh that, teaching others, I may teach myself also, as knowing how far I am from *having already attained*, or *being already perfect!*

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I. I would endeavour to show how lamentable a thing it is that the blessed God should be seen not more by the generality of mankind.

There are those who see *him that is invisible*; but, alas! how few are they! By far the greater part of mankind see him not, and desire not to see him. The language of their actions is such that, by it, they say unto God, *Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*, nor the enjoyment of thy love. How deplorable will this appear if we consider what advantages there are for seeing God, and what evils are incurred by not seeing and regarding him.

1. Let us seriously consider what advantages men have for seeing God. Well does the apostle observe, in an assembly of philosophers, that *the blessed God is not far from any one of us; for in him we live, and move,*

¹ Acts xvii.
27, 28.

*and have our being*¹. Well does he assert, in his entrance on the epistle to the Romans, that *the invisible things of God from the crea-*

² Rom. i.
20.

*tion of the world were clearly seen*², &c. The sacred lesson is, in a literal sense, written with the sunbeams; for *the heavens declare*

³ Psa. xix.
1.

*the glory of God*³. The most barbarous na-

tions, unskilled as they are in all other characters, may read this. *As their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world;* and we alone, of all the visible creation of God, are capable of attending to this intellectual language.—Lamentable is it, then, that the heathens should not see and know him. But let us reflect on the advantages which we enjoy in consequence of Divine Revelation. God has given to us his statutes, and *speaketh to us by his Son*: he has shown to us his agency and care in the most extraordinary instances. One would think that as soon as a man has once read over his Bible, its histories and institutions, its promises and threatenings, he should immediately see God: especially should see him, if he looked with any attention upon the reflection of his beautiful image from the face of Christ. Yet men have not only their Bibles in their hands, but they have them explained. They come and hear God adored in prayer, and in singing; hear his perfections celebrated; are expressly instructed in his nature, and in their duty to him; are called to turn away their eyes from vanity, and to fix them on God; and

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SERM. VI. yet they will not see him, though they have
line upon line, and precept upon precept, on every Sabbath, and almost on every day. O *fools, and slow of heart to believe, and to understand!* Such an unnatural aversion, from the sight and converse of the *great Father of spirits*, have they contracted in this fallen and degenerate state.

2. Consider what loss and damage men sustain by this species of blindness, and it will fully prove how lamentable a case it is. They lose the present satisfaction and happy influence of seeing God, and they make provision for a terrible interview. The present pleasure and advantage must necessarily be lost, and do you think even this a little thing? David did not, when he preferred it to all the joys of harvest: *Many say, who will show us any good? but thou* (that is, by the light of thy countenance) *hast put gladness into my heart.* This is a joy of a singular nature: let a man see it, though it be in a dungeon, and though he were set fast in the stocks, like Paul and Silas, he will sing praises to God. How can he be seen if a man will not look upon him? and this is the unhappy case, we have many worshippers of God, in our several assemblies,

but we have comparatively few who hold any acquaintance and converse with him. The generality might write upon their altars, *An inscription to the unknown God*. And hence it comes to pass that they are so weary of Divine service, that they that come to it with so much regret, and leave it with so much joy, and are ready to hurry out of the place, before it be fairly concluded, I fear in every sense unblest. It is because they see not God here, and then we have little reason to think that they see him any where else. The good man sets the Lord always before him; and this gives comfort to his most solitary moments: he can say, like his Master, when he seems to be left alone, *I am not alone, for my Father is with me*. A sweet relish does this give to many a wakeful hour of the night, when a man can say, *I remember thee on my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches*. But all this is lost for want of seeing God; and the mind is filled by night and by day with low thoughts, with mean pursuits, and very often with tormenting passions, which make a man as miserable as his heart can endure to be. Methinks it is a pitiable thing to reflect how vain and

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how wretched the generality of men are, when a noble, sublime, and rational happiness is so near. Poor creatures! they are like blind men feeling out their way in sad uncertainty; and, it may be, falling into a pit, or from a precipice at noonday, as the sacred writers elegantly represent this infatuation. They, alas! lose all the happy consequences of seeing God, I mean its tendency to regulate and reform the mind, its tendency to animate and encourage it.—Temptations encounter them, and, not seeing God, they are vanquished by them: *their heart is hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*, their conscience is debauched, so that perhaps they are grown past feeling, and incapable of being convinced that their ways are evil; and this appears to me the most wretched state in which the human mind can possibly be. A soul in this state has reason to apprehend that it will be very soon in that other state, which I am next to mention: where it will find that by living without God in this world, it has been laying a foundation for a terrible interview with him in another.

O sinner! the blessed God will not be al-

ways unseen, he will wait a certain limited time; and then he will awaken his terrors, and thou shalt see and hear whether thou wilt or not. Remember those words, *These things thou didst, and I kept silence; but I will reprove thee, and will set thy sins in order before thee. Consider this, ye that forget God*⁴! Death will come and hurry you into the presence of God. There you shall be more sensible that he is near to you, than you can now be of any thing which you see. And in the great judgment day, you shall see the Lord Jesus Christ coming, in the name and authority and glory of his Father, and then you will be convicted by him. Sinner! thou art charged on the testimony of God himself, who saw and knew thine heart; thou art charged with this great and horrible crime, that thou didst live without him in the world; that thou wouldst take no notice of him, nay, that thou didst in many instances make as it were an impious attack upon him, that is, on his laws and government; and for this thou art now accursed by him, and as such art sentenced to depart for ever from him, and from the blessed

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VI.⁴ Psal. l.
21.

SERM. VI. society of those who, having seen him by faith or reason, shall see his face for ever, and for ever rejoice in the reviving beams of his love.

O! how deplorable is it to look upon the ruins of so many souls, so many thousands and millions lost and undone beyond all recovery (who, if the constitution of their natures alone were considered, might have known God now, and have enjoyed him for ever). Ought it not to affect our hearts? Ought it not to engage us to do what we can in our respective stations, to promote a sense of God in the world, and to promote such a behaviour among men as may become those that see him? and ought it not to suggest to us many a warm and ardent prayer, that God would display his presence and glory before the eyes of poor sinners, now utterly insensible of it?

And now, what is the result of this representation? Are you, are you all, impressed with this matter? Is there any soul in this assembly that is secretly saying, I desire not to see *him that is invisible*. This intercourse with God by faith, of which I have been

hearing, I am willing that it should remain a secret to me. Let me see corn, and wine, and oil, let me see the grain spring in my field, my harvest flourishing, my trade increasing and thriving, my family healthful and cheerful about me, that part of the land in which I dwell safe from invading enemies, and my habitation from devouring flames, and I am not much concerned whether I see God or not. I can be content to live, in that respect, as I have done. Is this the language of you all? or are there any of you that can say, like Philip to Christ, Show us the Father and it suffices us? O that I knew where I might find him! O that I knew how I might attain to a more settled view of him; that I might so see him as to feel more of his presence, and to live more with him, so as to be restrained from sin and quickened to devotion, so as to be enlarged in benevolence, and inspired with courage and intrepidity of soul in the way of my duty: in a word, that I might so see him as to anticipate more every day the interview which I expect with him in the heavenly world. If these be your sentiments, then I hope you will hear me

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with attention while I go over what I intended, and prepared for such as you, which is,

II. To propose and illustrate at large such advices as may, by the Divine blessing, have the happiest tendency toward maintaining such a sight.

I mentioned them briefly in the conclusion of the former sermon; but I am sure that they will bear being dilated upon; for I will venture to say that they are lessons which we must learn, or we shall make very little proficiency in the Christian life, in any view of it.

1. Endeavour to get a firm and rational persuasion of the existence, providence, and presence of God. You all allow the thing at first hearing; but have you a firm persuasion of it on your own minds? Do you consider how evident, how apparent, how certain it is? Look about you, look within you, and reflect seriously. Could these things be without a God? Could I be without him? Did I call myself into being? Did another creature create me? If he were the means

of producing me, how came he by that power? How was he himself produced by another, and another? Still you will come to him who was the son of him, who was the son of God. How were the sun and moon formed, and the host of heaven? Who gave to them all their lustre? who fixed them in their orbs? who moves them with that swiftness and steadiness, so that all the process and order of them is the same from generation to generation? Look upon the tokens of his goodness, as well as of his power, in the formation of your body and your mind. Thou hast possessed my reins. Thou enterest as it were into the most vital parts of my frame, and there thou dwellest and actest continually; and there, thou, Lord, art doing, I know not particularly and assuredly what. But that which because I know not, it is plain that I do not myself; and yet that which if it be not done, I must die in a moment, and this poor body sink and drop under its own weight. Look about into the world: wherever you direct your eyes, you may trace the footsteps of Deity, and you must say, I am sure that God has been here, by the blessings which he has scattered,

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and left behind him ; or rather, I am sure that he is here, by the blessings which at every moment he is dealing out. How does the grass grow, the fruit ripen, the animals live ? It is because *God gives grass for the cattle, and corn and herb for the service of man.* It is because God feeds the fowls of the air, and they fly by his power.

I will not, then, set it down among possibilities, among probabilities, that there may probably or possibly be a God, but among the greatest certainties, of which the mind of man is capable ; as a thing of which I have as much evidence, as that there is any visible being at all, as great as that I have myself the power of thought.

2. Endeavour to view the blessed God, in the light in which the gospel of his Son has placed him. It is so noble and so amiable a view, that if you accustom yourselves to it, you will delight to dwell upon it, and to review it again and again. It represents God, not as slighting this world of ours, even when it had offended him, not as immediately destroying it, or as marking its inhabitants for a day of slaughter, as traitors, and maintained at the expense of the

king till their execution day is come; but as entertaining thoughts of love and mercy toward poor sinful man, as caring for us with a great care, and employing his counsels, even long before we were born, for our deliverance, and for our salvation. It represents him as busying himself so much (if I may use the expression) about us and our concerns, as to send his own Son, to inform us who he himself is, and what he would have us to be; what he expects from us on the one hand, and what we may expect from him on the other. Yea, as sending his Son in a mortal body, that he might converse with us for a long time, and might sow the seeds of true religion in our world; seeds which were to last as long as this world itself: and that he might at length die for us too, and redeem us to God, by pouring forth his own blood, and that he might leave a gospel behind him, written by the inspiration of his Spirit, which, under Divine blessing and grace, might be the food and comfort of souls from one generation to another: that gospel which he brought down from heaven. O! did those poor blind heathens reverence and adore a senseless image of

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Deity, because they supposed it of heavenly original, the image that fell down from Jupiter out of heaven! What reason have we to value Christ and his gospel, as of celestial original indeed; and to love that God who sent us such a present, a blessing so much more valuable than the sun in the firmament! And how delightful should it be to us, to look to the blessed God in this, as *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and, in and through him, as *the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation!*

3. Labour to secure an interest in God through Christ, and then it will be pleasant to maintain a sight of him. The great reason why men look at God no more, is because they dread the sight of him, their consciences telling them that he is their enemy, or at least that he may be so, that it is at best a very dubious case whether they have any interest in him or not. Labour, therefore, I beseech you to make it out to your own souls, as a plain and evident thing, that you have a covenant interest in God. And how can this be done but by solemnly laying hold of his covenant in Christ, and by setting your seal to it? Wilt thou not, says

God, from this time, cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth? And surely it is a pleasant thing for a dutiful and affectionate child to look upon his Father. View him not merely as reconcilable; as one who may, perhaps, lay aside his wrath, and become your friend; but as one who is actually reconciled. Go to him, therefore, this day and say, "Lord, I have been a rebel, and I have deserved to die for my rebellion. I deserve that he, who made me, should not have mercy on me; and that he, who formed me, should show me no favour. But I have heard that thou art a merciful God. I have been told that thou didst condescend to say, and even to swear, that *thou desirest not the death of a sinner*. I have been told that thou didst send thine own dear and gracious Son into this world of ours, to call back poor lost creatures to thee, and to purchase pardon for them, and to declare it to them; yea, that thou hast assured us by him that *he who believes shall have eternal life*. Now, Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief. I have been told that thou hast been pleased to make a covenant, a new and better covenant, with poor sinners, of which he is the

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Surety. I desire to enter myself into this covenant; I am heartily willing to be saved by thee in thine own way, and therefore I beseech thee that thou wouldst save me. I beseech thee that thou wouldst become my God and Father in Christ, and I present myself to thee in token of this desire, and would gladly, whenever thou shalt give me an opportunity, do it at thy table. Yea, I desire daily to repeat it as my own act and deed, to give myself to thee, and to receive thee, through Christ, into my soul as my portion, and hope, and God." When you are conscious of this temper you will view God not only with pleasure, but I had almost said, in allusion to the common form of our expressing ourselves, with pride (but that were improper) with humble joy and triumph; as the Psalmist, *behold this God is our God!* O how I delight to fix my eyes upon him, and survey him in this view! This God, with all his infinite wisdom and almighty power, and immense inexhaustible treasure of goodness, and mercy, and faithfulness, and love, is mine, and mine for ever. Shall one man view his estate, and another his honour with satisfaction? and another perhaps his per-

son, and another even his dress, and inwardly congratulate himself that he is so rich, and so powerful, and so beautiful, and so fine? And shall not I with infinitely greater satisfaction view my God, and congratulate my own soul that I am so happy as to possess him, and to stand in such a relation to him? I would do it every day and every hour.

4. If you desire to maintain such views of him, *who is invisible*, then guard against an undue attachment to all things that are seen, to this world and its interests.

These things do, as it were, stand in the way of God; they make such a crowd about us, that we cannot see him. It alienates the heart from his love and service, so says the apostle in those remarkable words, 1 John, ii. 15, *Love not the world nor the things of the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* If you are much attached to worldly interests, you will venture to displease God for the sake of them, and then, when you have displeased him, you will not care to see him with those marks of displeasure which his awful countenance will wear. As our Lord says, *No man*

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can serve two masters ; you cannot serve God and Mammon ; and the soul that serves not God with some degree of zeal, as well as of fidelity, loves not to see him, and thus the world concludes. Whereas the heart, in which God has dwelt, and which has been used to live in the sight of him, when flesh and heart fail, has something for the strength of its heart, and its portion for ever. What then will you say, must we needs go out of the world, and betake ourselves to the life of hermits, that we may preserve religion in our hearts? By no means. We may do it with much greater honour to religion by abiding in the converse of the world, even though we had it in our power to quit it, which many of us have not. We may show more of the force of it, and we may spread more of the spirit of it, by a social and conversable life. But then let us take heed that business and conversation do not possess our minds so much, as to leave in them no room for God. Let us take care that we be often looking at the blessed God while we are conversing in the world : and let us guard against a fond affection for any thing in this world, which would give us a disrelish of

devotion and the exercises of it. The greatest and noblest exercise is, not to fly from the world, but to meet and conquer it; nor can it be better expressed than by the apostle, that *those who rejoice should be as though they rejoiced not.*

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5. If we would maintain habitual intercourse with God, let us think frequently and solemnly of the invisible world to which we are going. This advice stands in connexion with the former, both giving and receiving strength, and therefore they are joined by the apostle, *Look not at the things which are seen, but at those things which are unseen.* How happy would it be for us in this respect if we could look at the things which are unseen! Is there not a world of spirits, of a nature quite different from, and vastly superior to this world of bodies, in which we dwell? Expatriate, my thoughts, in this immense region. And what inhabitants dost thou see here? I see on the one hand the Paradise of God, where Jehovah dwells: on the other, millions of bright and happy creatures who, during the many thousand years for which they have existed (and God only knows how many thousand), have never

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known a sentiment of guilt, or a perception of misery? Is there not such a species of beings? I certainly know from the word of God that there is, and that among them there are human spirits, who once dwelt in such bodies as mine, and having broken their way through the entanglements, temptations, and dangers of life, are received by the angels as their brethren and friends, and dwell with them, sharing, in some considerable degree, in their business and their pleasures. And is there not another kind of a region, of darkness and despair, where the fallen spirits dwell? *The angels that kept not their first state*, but sinned, and upon that were cast down from heaven! And are there not, likewise, among them vast numbers that once dwelt upon earth, who saw the sun, and tasted, but abused the bounty of their Creator? Thousands, ten thousands, no doubt, who heard his word, but trifled with the grace of his gospel, during the certain time which God had allotted to them for their trial, and who are cut off, and are under condemnation, to whom *nothing remains but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation*. And are these scenes which

have no connexion with my *concerns*? I see one and another of my fellow creatures, drop the body and disappear. The invisible spirit flies off, and the poor abandoned carcass is laid in the dust, that it may not affect the living, and thus it becomes invisible too, as to any certain remainder which can be traced of it; and must not I shortly take my turn? I am even now surrounded by these invisible beings; the angels wait to guard me, and are the instruments of a gracious Providence for my preservation; the devils are near too, and wait opportunities of mischief; and ere long I shall see myself in the hands of the one or of the other, and know that they are bearing me on my way to heaven or to hell, as my final, as my everlasting abode. When this thought enters deep into the mind it will be natural to look to an invisible God, the great Lord of both these worlds, and of all their various inhabitants: it is natural to commit a soul, an immortal soul (the importance of which will then be felt), to his powerful and faithful care.

6. That we should often be setting our-

SERM. selves to think expressly of God, and to speak
 VI. directly to him.

⁵ Psalm
 ciii. 1, 2.

Visible objects have a great advantage over us. We must, therefore, have our proper seasons of retirement, our proper times for calling our thoughts from the world, for charging them to have done with it, that we may converse with God and Divine things; that we should summon up our souls to the work, as David, *Bless the Lord, O my soul*⁵, &c.; so should we say, View the Lord, O my soul, contemplate him and his glories. O think what a mysterious, what a marvellous, what an amiable being he is! Look through the whole creation, and see what deserves thy esteem, thy love, and thy trust, in comparison with him: he is accessible through Christ, he hears prayers, he listens to the cry of his servants and his people. Resolve, therefore, that thou wilt converse with him: address him, therefore, by daily prayer, and particularly in secret. Enter into thy closet, it will assist thy conceptions of him, it will remind thee of his existence, and of thy business with him there; and see to it that this part of duty do not degenerate

into a form, that the soul be right with God while it is performed; and I do not doubt but it will have a most happy influence; and will bring the mind to such a temper and disposition that you may often be able to direct the eye of the soul to God in the intervals of such solemnities; as a pious native of France expresses it, that when he passed through the streets of Paris, where one may well imagine there would be diversions enough, his soul was no more moved than if he were in a desert.

7. Let us cry earnestly to the *great Father of spirits* to direct our fallen and degenerate minds to himself, if we desire to maintain our frequent views of him.

We might, says that excellent person, to whom I have just referred, as soon bring down fire from heaven, or draw the stars from their orbits, as kindle devotion in our own cold dead hearts without a Divine agency and operation. The Lord opened the eyes of Hagar, and she saw the relief which he had prepared for her in the wilderness. He must open our eyes, or we shall not see him. Cry therefore to him with all your souls, and if you feel your hearts raised to him, look upon

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it as a token for good, as an assurance not only of his providential but gracious presence. “O thou *King eternal, immortal, and invisible!* thou art ever with me, and yet I see thee not: ever near to me, and yet I do not perceive thee: and important as thy presence is, I am often insensible of it: and shall it be always thus? Lord! I cannot bear it. I am persuaded that I see; and, blessed be thy name, I feel it, that it were better to die than to live as at a distance from thee: better to have no being at all than to lose God among his creatures, though it were the most excellent of them: and, therefore, O Lord, I earnestly entreat this favour of thee, not that thou wouldst make me rich and great, that thou wouldst prosper me in my worldly affairs, though I desire such prosperity as thou shalt see best, but that the eye of my soul may be directed to thee. I would say as thy servant Moses, *O Lord! I beseech thee show me thy glory*⁶, in a spiritual sense! Give me such a view of thee as may fix my roving mind upon thee more than ever! Let me see thee so as to rejoice, if it be thy blessed will; but if not, let me see thee so as to fear thee, and to love thee, and to

⁶ Exod.
xxxiii. 18.

conduct myself in a manner that may be agreeable to thee: that in whatever darkness I now walk, I may at last come to see light in thy light, so to behold thy face in righteousness, as to be satisfied with thy complete likeness; and, when my foolish heart would lose sight of thee in the midst of these surrounding vanities, let me rather be made to feel thine hand smiting me than to live in a forgetfulness of thy presence!"

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Is there a heart in this assembly that can say amen to these petitions? If there be, I will be humbly bold to say it is a heart that has already seen God, a heart that, persisting in these sentiments, will see and enjoy him for ever.

SERMON VII.

DAVID'S REFLECTION ON THE VANITY OF
THE CREATURE.

PSALM cxix. 96.

*I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is
exceeding broad.*

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IT is the great and glorious design of the gospel to abstract our affections from this present vain and transitory world, and to teach us to settle them on the solid and permanent blessings of that which is to come. A kind and amiable design indeed: a design which Christ, *the wisdom of God*, judged of so great importance to human happiness, that we are told that he came from heaven, and gave himself for us, *that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father*¹. It is a grievous and lamentable thing to reflect upon, that immortal spirits should so generally have been held in a mean subjection to

¹ Gal. i.
4.

the world: but it was the will of God to free some of them from it, and many important steps were taken towards this great design before the appearance of the Son of God in human flesh: one of which was to represent the case of the world in a moving manner, in the oracles of the Old Testament, that so the heart struck by that, might give up its expectations of happiness in the creature, and seek it in God, in whom alone it can be found. And as examples and instances strike yet more strongly than any deduction of abstruse argument, it shows us some of those who, by reason of their situation in the world, might have expected the greatest things of it, bearing their testimony to the empty and unsatisfying nature of all its enjoyments, and to the disappointment of their fondest hopes and expectations of it. It is no inconsiderable passage to this purpose which I have now been reading, where David makes this reflection after a long course of observation and experience: *I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad.* For the sense of which words I might consider what he means *by perfection*; what by

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seeing an end of it; what *by the commandment of God*; and what *by its being exceeding broad*. For stating which particulars I shall only give you the following general remarks, in as few words as possible. I apprehend that by *perfection*, David means what the world generally thinks most perfect and excellent; by *seeing the end of it*, he intended to tell us that he has observed it to be very narrow and limited, mixed with a great many defects, so as, indeed, not to deserve the name of perfection: by the *commandment of God*, he means the law, or word of God in general, or that revelation which he has made of himself; and by the breadth of the commandment, the perfection of it, and its tendency to conduct men to that complete happiness which worldly enjoyments can never give. The sense therefore may be expressed in such a paraphrase as this: "Lord! when I seriously pause and reflect upon what has occurred to my observation in this long and various scene of life, through which I am passing, I discover a great and instructive variety. There was a time when my hopes and expectations were raised high; ten thousand flattering objects presented

themselves to my warm imagination; my heart was fired with sprightly passions, and I promised myself a kind of paradise here: but my enjoyments fell far short of these anticipations; the sweets were soon exhausted, the flowers withered, and the blossoms untimely drooped: yet, though earth is vain, blessed be God! all is not vain. The revelation which God has made of himself opens a fair and an ample prospect which fills the soul with pleasure, and with hope; with a pleasure, with a sweetness, and a hope that brightens by experience. It discovers something for which it was worth while to have had a rational and immortal nature, an object adequate to the sublimity of faculties, like those which God has bestowed upon me: here I may expatiate, and not find myself cramped and fettered as before; no encumbrance, no disgrace, no gloomy prognostication of approaching decay: but a happiness presents itself extensive as my wish, sublime as a spiritual, and durable as an immortal nature. *I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad.*" Agreeably to this paraphrase (the

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justest and most natural which I can think of), we will more particularly consider,

I. The reflections made by David on the vanity which he had experienced in the creature.

II. The honourable testimony which he here bears to true religion, and to the word of God, as his great support.

We will illustrate and improve each of these remarks; but I apprehend that the illustration and improvement of the former will afford us abundant employment for the discourses of this day.

I. We are to consider the reflections made by David on the vanity which he had experienced in the creature: *I have seen an end of all perfection.*

I see nothing in this Psalm which forbids our referring it to the latter part of David's life: at least I may confidently say this, and all that know any thing of his history will consent to this truth at first hearing, without waiting for a more particular and laboured proof of it, that if his youthful days gave him some intimations of this, his more

experienced life made it abundantly apparent, both with regard to the *personal*, and the *relative* possessions and enjoyments of life. We will illustrate the matter with respect to each of them; and then we will conclude with the improvement which is to close the discourses of this day.

1. David had experienced the vanity of creature good, with respect to the *personal* possessions, ornaments, and enjoyments of human life. When we come to take a survey of his character and circumstances, we shall find that this remark is just with respect to *strength, beauty, genius, wealth, applause, and power*. He had weighed all these in the balance, had seen and known what there was in them to make a man happy; and the result of all is, that he writes *Tekel* upon them, and soon saw the end of all this perfection. He had seen the vanity of strength. David seems to have been furnished with a very uncommon degree of it. He gave early proof not only of an heroic spirit, but of vigorous and well braced nerves, strengthened no doubt by the labours and fatigues to which, from his youth, and almost from his infancy, he was

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exposed. When he was but a stripling, he tells us that, while he was feeding his father's sheep, a lion and a bear, no doubt at different times, invaded the flock, and bore away, each of them, one of the lambs of it. And he boldly pursued these voracious savages, and not only rescued the prey from them, but smote the lion and the bear (that is, he slew them); and when, animated by the remembrance of these victories, he ventured to encounter the Philistine giant, though Saul's armour was too unwieldly for him, and proved an encumbrance rather than a suitable defence, yet we find that he was able not only to discharge a stone with force enough to penetrate the skull of Goliath (the thickness of which was no doubt proportionable to his extraordinary height and bulk), but also to brandish his sword, ponderous as it was, and to make use of it as the instrument of cutting off the head of its owner. Yet he had no doubt seen, yea, and at length undoubtedly felt how precarious and transitory a perfection this was. He saw many examples about him of human nature cut off in its prime and vigour; saw, as Job expresses it, *one dying in the perfec-*

tion of his strength (for so the original phrase is), *being wholly at ease, and in pleasure*², as well as *another in the bitterness of his soul*; ² Job, xxi. 23. yea, we know that David himself experienced it. The assault of disease reduced him so low, that he says, in one Psalm, *Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak*³: and, in ³ Psal. vi. 2. another, *My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh faileth of fatness*⁴. And probably it is he that, in a third, says, *He has weakened my strength in the way*⁵; he has ⁴ Psal. cix. 24. shortened my days. And though God heard his prayer in that illness, and spared him that he might *recover strength, before he went hence and was seen no more*; yet he found it at length gradually wasting, and irrecoverably impaired: so that when he came forth in the advance of life to war, and would have *shaken himself as at other times, he fought against the Philistine, and waxed faint*; and Ishbi-benob thought to have slain him, and probably would have done it had not Abishai succoured him; and his soldiers, sensible that he was no longer able to bear such fatigue, and to encounter such danger, solemnly swore that he should go out to battle no more, *lest he should quench*

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VII.² Job, xxi.
23.³ Psal. vi.
2.⁴ Psal. cix.
24.⁵ Psal. cii.
23.

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the light of Israel. The tenderness which his people thus expressed for him must, no doubt, have been gratifying, but the occasion of it was mortifying; and he would much more feel the vanity and frailty of nature when it was so exhausted in him that they covered him with clothes on his bed, and he got no heat, even he whose heart had beat so high, and whose breast had burnt with a flame which had so long animated the armies of Israel, and like lightning had consumed those of the enemy.

2. Experience had taught David how little beauty could do to make the possessor happy. There had, perhaps, seldom been seen (at least for his stature) a more lovely form amongst all the thousands of Israel. The very first thing we read of him, even before he is named, is, that he *was ruddy, and of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon.* There was something so engaging in his behaviour, that at the very first sight *the soul of Jonathan was knit to him, so that he loved David, even as his own soul.* And Michal, Saul's daughter, also loved him, and thought herself no doubt exceedingly happy in so amiable a person; and it is observable,

that as he could not be altogether unconscious of his own form, though he was too wise to value himself highly upon it, he takes notice of this effect of that illness which he describes in the 39th Psalm, *When thou with rebukes dost correct man for his iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth*; and as that loses all its golden and silver array, and is beaten to pieces by every storm, so does all the goodness of a human form moulder at the touch of a disease. Many a beautiful countenance he had no doubt in his time seen pale in death: many he also had lived to see worn out with age; and *Abishag*, the Shunamite, when she ministered to the bed-ridden king, would not be able to trace in his countenance those charms which had made so deep an impression on the heart of *Michal*. *Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain*, was a reflection which Solomon might, in past time, have learnt from the sight of his father, as well as from that of thousands of other objects: but I hasten to a much more important illustration. And,

3. David had also seen the limits of that perfection which arises from a large and extensive genius, and great abilities of mind;

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for which, as it is very evident, he was remarkable. The grace and beauty of his mind were far more valuable than those of his body: he discovered a great genius in a variety of instances, in war and government, in music and poetry; and, so far as we can judge, this continued with him to the last, for we have some most sublime and excellent discourses which he made just before he quitted the stage; and his last words have a flame and tenderness of poetry in them which would have been sufficient to have established his character as a poet, if they had been the only writings of his which had reached us: yet his sweetest music could not charm away his cares, or lay his sorrows asleep. Difficulties arose against which his prudence could not provide expedients, and which his courage could not ward off, as we shall afterwards see in a long detail. And if he ever turned himself from political and military studies to those of a philosophical nature, he would there, no doubt, find himself often entangled: uncertainty would arise instead of knowledge, and his sagacity would only serve him to discover difficulties, of which the less thinking and penetrating

part of the world were not aware. For this is the reflection which Solomon made, whose peaceful reign, joined with his yet superior genius, gave him an opportunity of pursuing science to its remotest recesses. *I beheld* (says he) *all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun; because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it: yea farther, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.* He therefore admonishes his son, that of *making many books there is no end, and that much study is a weariness to the flesh*, which, in many instances, is not repaid by any improvement which the spirit makes. And though David's parts wore so well, it is very probable that he had seen many instances in which the child outlived the man till itself died away in the idiot: for such is often the end of that glory which seems most appropriate to the mind of man; and which bears itself so high, because the treasure of a kingdom cannot purchase any portion of it.

4. David had seen the vanity of great treasures. He had seen it, indeed, while he was possessing himself of them: for you

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know that he was the least of his brethren, the youngest child of a numerous family; where, perhaps, the eldest was but slenderly provided for; and the vast treasures, which he amassed, were chiefly the spoils of plundered provinces, taken in a just and honourable war, especially from the Syrians, who had their shields of gold, and seem to have been before the wealthiest people of the world: but when he seized these shields, he saw, as it were, vanity written upon them, as they were unable to defend their former owners, and seemed only to add grief and misery to their defeat. He was not, indeed, that sordid wretch, to whom God, having given abundance, gave not a heart to eat thereof: he lived in a series of generous expense, and royal magnificence, as evidently appears by his buildings, and his court: but still his treasures grew instead of diminishing, and they amounted to an incredible sum; so that those given by him and his people towards building the temple are computed at eight hundred millions sterling. Three thousand talents of gold, and seven thousand of silver, being not his whole treasure, but only that part of it which he devoted to this one

pious purpose: but behold the vanity of this! though the rich *man's wealth be his strong tower, and a high wall* in his own conceit. David, who had, no doubt, read of Job's afflictions, was made in an astonishing manner to share them, for one day stripped him of all. I mean the day of Absalom's rebellion; when he was driven out from Jerusalem, where all these treasures were amassed; and when he passed up Mount Olivet barefoot, and with his head covered. The aged king was obliged to wander again in that same wilderness where, amongst other places, he had sheltered himself in the vigour of youth from the persecution of Saul; but O! with how different a sense of distress, when after all his royal grandeur, he was sensibly obliged to that generous friend who would bring to him and his attendants, beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and beans, and lentils, and butter, and sheep, and cheese: what a present for him! who had numbered such immense quantities of gold, and silver, and brass, and such a multitude of precious stones also. At length Providence turns the scales in his favour: he returns to his treasure again; but, alas!

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this treasure will not bring back his beloved Absalom from the grave, nor cure the wound which his death had made in the heart of the affectionate parent, who would have given his own life for his preservation. Then, as on other occasions, also,

5. David experienced the vanity of human applause. He might, perhaps, relish it in his youth: his heart was fortified with a wisdom far superior to his years, if the songs of the daughters of Israel, and the shouts of its warriors did not secretly delight him, when it was the voice of both, as he returned from the slaughter of Goliath, that *Saul had slain his thousands*, and *David his ten thousands*. But, alas! soon did he learn that for this also *a man is envied of his neighbour*: the sound was soon over, and all the *honours*, shall I say, or the *labours* of that triumphant day, for no small part of labour and fatigue does the victor himself undergo in the cavalcade of a triumph. But the consequence long continued: the javelin, with which his prince attempted again and again to have nailed him to the wall; the anguish of parting with his beloved wife, when the endearments of

their marriage were so new; the anxiety with which he wandered in a wilderness, and fled for his life, as a partridge on the mountains pursued by the fowlers. All these sad scenes, and thousands more no doubt, made him to wish that he had never heard this applause, which might once sound so sweet in his ears. At length he ascends the throne: he triumphs over his enemies: the tributary princes, round about him, send their ambassadors, and, no doubt, with them, their compliments in the highest strain of eastern hyperboles; and where they had so great a subject, we may well suppose that they rose high. But, alas! how soon is all this incense vanished in the air, or gathered into a cloud, dark and tempestuous. His government is aspersed with secret slanders by those who endeavoured to subvert it; and at length his enemies succeed in spreading so general a discontent, that he is expelled from his capital city; and then, in that sad procession, every base scoundrel dares to insult over him. Shimei's foul mouth pours forth its venom: and he, who had so generously spared the life of Saul, when he had it again and again in his power, is loaded with infamy,

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6 2 Sam.
xvi. 5-8.

as a bloody traitor: *Come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial*⁶: but O, might David say, "O that this were the worst of my trials!" Alas! there was a scene in which he gave too just an occasion to the enemies to blaspheme: that opprobrious language, which would otherwise have fallen like foul water from the down of a swan, without leaving a trace behind it, *came into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones* (for so he complains, after his sin, in the matter of Uriah), *thou hast known my shame and my dishonour, and reproach has broken my heart.* And where did he seek his comfort then? Was it in looking at the royal throne on which he sat? I am to add further,

6. That David most remarkably saw the vanity of power, even when exalted to royalty. He had, indeed, the fate of cities and of nations dependent on his smile or his frown: *He measured with a line to cast down, and to build up, to slay or to save alive.* But that power, how weak did it prove! how soon was he disarmed of it by a sudden revolution, when forced to flee for his life, and to pass over Jordan by night! Described there-

fore by his enemies, *to be weary and weak handed, so as easily to be smitten by a handful of men*: and, indeed, he was so; and had not God turned the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness, he must without a miracle have perished by it. But I say no more of this at present, because when I come to consider him in relative life, I shall speak of him as a *king*, and shall expose to your view some of the many thorns which lined the crown of gold which Israel set upon his head. At present I speak only of the uncertainty of that power itself which would have rendered it a most imperfect good, had the actual enjoyment been ever so delightful. Accordingly having thus surveyed the most considerable personal enjoyments and possessions, let us now consider,

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II. How David experienced the vanity of created good, with respect to *relative* comforts and enjoyments.

And here you will observe, that there was hardly a relation which promised happiness in which David did not stand. He was a husband and a father, a friend and a king, yet in each of these he experienced the vanity

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of human life, and *saw an end of all the perfection* which it could promise.

1. Let us in this view consider David as a *husband*. Here we must observe, that he seems to set out with a happiness not always common to the great: that he married a person whom he loved, and by whom he was tenderly beloved; the beautiful daughter of king Saul, from whose faithful and endearing society and friendship one would think that he might have promised himself all that he could have wished in such a relation (no doubt the sweetest of human life), and from which many of its most important blessings spring: but, alas! he was soon torn from her embraces; she herself was forced to rouse him and send him away, conveying him through a window to escape the assassins who surrounded all the passages of the house, in order to slay him. A tender parting no doubt, the sorrows of which were on both sides much aggravated when Michal was most injuriously and infamously given to *Shalti*, the son of Laish, a circumstance which, whether it were accomplished by direct force, or by an unwilling kind of consent on her part, must have been ex-

tremely afflicting as well as dishonourable to David. And though, more than ten years afterwards, he regained her, yet her temper then appears to have been, at least in one instance, exceedingly distressing to him. She despised his pious, and, on the whole, very modest and discreet zeal, in dancing before the ark of the Lord; and she mixed profaneness with an insolence and severity of temper, which, if it were a specimen of her usual behaviour, must to be sure have rendered both her and her consort very unhappy. She afterwards abode under the curse of barrenness, which in that connexion would be peculiarly grievous; and, as for his other wives, the very number of them would be sufficient to have destroyed the prospect of a tender and solid comfort in any one. As to some of them we know that they proved the occasion of his public disgrace, by the special interposition of a righteous Providence, and in the accomplishment of a terrible prediction. *Absalom went in unto them openly, on the house top*, as a public token that he was determined never to think of an accommodation with his father, who was not to be imagined capable of forgiving

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such a wrong. But, indeed, before this it appeared how far he was from being happy in the conjugal life, by that impure flame which seizes not on contented and happy hearts, when he was ensnared by the beauty of Bathsheba, and violated the bed of that faithful subject and gallant hero, who was then fighting his battles, therein acting a part most unworthy not only of David, but of a common Israelite; nay, indeed of one who, though *an alien from the commonwealth of Israel*, had any feeling of honour or of decency. He afterwards married that beautiful woman; and she seems to have been, during the remainder of his life, his favourite queen. But undoubtedly all the pleasure which he enjoyed in his relation to her would be mutually embittered by the remembrance of that guilt on which that relation was founded.

2. Let us consider David as a father, and we shall find his disappointments equal under that character. You know that God gave him a numerous offspring: of some of them, indeed, we know nothing more than their names; but, with regard to others of them, we know that they were remarkably

beautiful, and dearly beloved by their father. SERM.
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In this number, under one or the other of these classes, and, perhaps, under all, were Amnon and Adonijah, Absalom and Tamar. But can I mention their names, without bringing to your memory the black tragedy which made the family of David wretched almost to a proverb? What father would not think it enough to break his heart, if one of his children, and that too his eldest hope, should be guilty of a rape, on whomsoever it were committed, and so become liable to death by the law of God and man? especially if this rape were incestuous, committed on the person of another of his children, sister to the criminal? and more especially if public infamy and most unmanly cruelty were to be added to the injury? Yet all this, you know, came to pass with respect to Amnon, and his fair sister Tamar, whose beauty (like that of many others, whom history has recorded, and numbers more too inconsiderable for history), proved to be her ruin. What father would not grieve if one of his children should be guilty of murder? how much more if it were a brother whom he murdered? Yet this, also, was the

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calamity of David. In this respect, a trial much greater than that of Job, who lost his children, innocent at least, and as it seemed by the immediate stroke of Providence. Amnon was assassinated at a feast which Absalom had made for him, and to which his father had expressly consented that he should go; and religion was made by that profane wretch the cover for fratricide. On this he fled for a considerable time, and the overfond David was afflicted at his absence. When he was restored he was for a time, and only for a short time, banished from his presence; but even then, when permitted to live in Jerusalem, he was plotting against the crown, and the life of his father. What father would not be grieved that his son should be a rebel to a mild and righteous prince, though personally a stranger? How much more lamentable was it when there was a rebellion at once against his king and his parent? A rebellion in which his father's banishment would not suffice the young barbarian; but in which he was impatient to embroe his hands in his blood. Yet this did David see; and then saw him fall by the singular vengeance of heaven, with all his guilt upon

his head, and butchered in the most shocking manner, even in the most express contradiction to his tender command. I doubt not but these scenes had a great hand in impairing the strength of David, and wearing him out at seventy years, notwithstanding the native vigour of his constitution, which might have reached to a much greater age. And no doubt it was a further shock to his sinking frame, when Adonijah, of whom it is expressly said that he was a very goodly man, like his brother Absalom (and that his father had never displeased him at any time by saying, *Why hast thou done so?*) became a rebel against Solomon, and therefore against God (by whose authority Solomon was anointed as well as David, who made him his associate on the throne), and thereby forfeited his life. O! who would, upon terms like these, have been the father of this beautiful flock? When the tender pleasures of their infant caresses were so overbalanced by the daggers which they planted in the bosom which had cherished them, by the stab which they gave to the bowels out of which they came, who would

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not rather have said, Happy, in comparison of such parents, *are the wombs that never bare, and the breasts that never gave suck.* But they who have been unhappy in their children have sometimes been happy in their friends. Let us view David,

3. Under the character of a friend. And so far as I can judge, never was man more faithful, more tender, and more generous under that character. And never was friendship better deserved, or better repaid than that of David to Jonathan. He seemed to be a person pointed out by heaven for the second blessing of David's life, for he would willingly allow the first part to his sister, under the nearer relation of wife. But, alas! the bands of this desirable friendship, which united their hearts, were no sooner knit than broken. All that we read of the effect of this friendship is the mutual condolence of the friends. But no doubt David comforted himself with the idea of making his friend, as he had promised, the second in the kingdom after his own accession to the crown; and thought how happy he should be in such a counsellor; in such a guard, with whom he,

would so have shared the royal power, that the house of Saul should scarcely perceive that they had lost it. Vain flattering hopes! for with Saul, Jonathan also was slain; and there the sword of the Philistines, which in other forms had so often attempted it in vain, now reached the heart of David, mingled his tears with the anointing oil that was poured upon his head, and stained his royal robe with weeping. For these were his accents, *I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan.* And by whom was the loss repaired? By Ahithophel, in whom he confided, as if it had been the contrivance of heaven to wound him most where he loved best. These, therefore, were the accents of his sorrows when his friend Ahithophel distinguished himself by the blackest counsel against him, when there was not a man in Israel who equalled his cruelty, when he offered to have smitten him with his own hand, *It was not, says he, an enemy that reproached me, &c.* Now when these dear names of husband, father, and friend afford so little solid happiness, the name of king gives no great expectation. Yet I am to consider him,

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4. Under his royal character. Concerning which you will observe, that he appears to have had as tender an affection for his people as ever prince had, of which he gives this sure, though sad token, that when his own soul was in the deepest distress, under the sense of guilt, he mingles his prayers for Zion, with intercession for his own pardon. When out of the depths he cried to God, he says, in the language of humble faith and earnest desire, *Let Israel hope in the Lord, for he shall redeem Israel out of all its troubles.* When crying out, as of broken bones, and in fear of being cast away from God's presence, he says, *Do good in thy good pleasure to Sion, &c.* Yet he was not without his trials as a prince. Though he had a long series of victory and glory, he saw Israel affronted when his ambassadors were sent to Hanan; and afterward he saw it seduced, first by Absalom, whose vile tales were believed, though they unpitiably sought the destruction of its aged, faithful, and affectionate monarch: and then, upon a little provocation, received from a haughty word, ten of its tribes cried out in insolent defiance, *We have no part in David,*

neither have we any inheritance in the son of Jesse. Every man to his tents, O Israel! SERM.
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 Ungrateful words! and then they follow, I know not whom, one Sheba, the son of Bikri, a vain upstart, whom they were base enough to prefer to the most illustrious monarch who had ever sat on a throne; who had so often gone in and out before them, and had fought, and had been deservedly called the *light of Israel*. This ingratitude must have wounded him more sharply than the weapons of their rebellion could otherwise have done; and would give him a renewed and painful occasion to repeat the remark, *I have seen an end of all perfection*.

And who would on the whole have been David, great and triumphant, rich and powerful as he was, if this had been all that we know of his history? But we reflect upon it with pleasure, that he was a faithful servant of God, that he had his word for his support, and that he lived in communion with God, and in devotedness to him. Happy, had he ever maintained this high character! but, alas! it is not to be disowned that he had one other more melancholy experience of the vanity of all created perfection, the imperfection of the

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human heart, and the mutable nature of the most confirmed habits of virtue and holiness. Witness that unhappy fall which I mentioned before, and which I love not to repeat; the remembrance of which added such a sting to all his other sorrows, which brought that fatal sentence upon him, that *the sword should not depart from his house*, and wrote the tokens of Divine displeasure, even in the blood of his children: so that, even before the judgment actually came upon him, he cried out, *Make me to hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.*

I have dilated so much upon the illustration of these heads, that I must reduce the improvement within very narrow bounds. But some of the particulars of it are so obvious, that I am well satisfied many of my hearers have already prevented me in their own minds. We may say then,

1. Let not the inexperienced think too highly of the world. You who are setting out in it, to whom its pleasures and its prospects are new; you will, I dare say, have the modesty to own, that your prospects are not to be compared with those of David: expect

not, therefore, the perfection which he could not find. *Let not him that is deceived, in this respect, trust in vain words, for vanity will be his recompense.* I would not, indeed, have you terrify yourselves with the expectation of some very tragical event. Your passage through life may be easy and fair, but this can never be your home and your rest. Some degree of sorrow is the lot of mankind, and the felicity of the happy has many mixtures and alloys. By keeping your expectations low, you will meet disappointment the better prepared: your enjoyments, by how much the less they were depended upon, will be the more agreeable; and, what is the best consequence of all, you will by these means be detached from this world, and setting but a small value upon it, its temptations will have but little force upon you, and you will be better disposed to look forward to a better world beyond the grave, and will be daily improving more in your preparations for it.

2. Let not the experienced wonder at the emptiness which they find in the world. *What shall the man do that comes after the king?* Have we more to hope for than the

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illustrious David? Have we more to claim than he? Think it not strange if yet greater trials should happen to you; and, remember that, some degree of chastisement is so far from being any argument of being disregarded by God, that it is often a token of his peculiar favour.

3. Let us rejoice in the reflection, that David, amidst all his disappointments and troubles, had an interest in the blessings of an everlasting covenant. To this he sweetly refers in his last words, and reposes himself upon it with a peculiar delight. *Though,* says he, *my house be not so with God, yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant.* We cannot but love the character of David, with all the alloys which were blended with it; and it is delightful to think that he did not sink under his burden, but that God supported him: with what? with the views of that covenant which, through Christ, is now made with each of us, and which therefore may support us, even though we were in the like extremities. And, to close all,

4. Let us all turn, with him, to the word of God, and seek this perfection there, which cannot be found in the greatest variety, or

the greatest abundance of created enjoyments. Blessed be God! that law in which David found so much comfort, and which he speaks of as so dear and valuable, beyond the joys of dividing the spoil, beyond the sweetness *of honey, or the honeycomb*; that law is still before us, yea, greatly improved by the glorious addition of the gospel. Let us therefore take it up as a Divine treasure, as infinitely more precious than rubies. There let us seek that God from whom it came, and in him let us centre our happiness; saying from our heart, as David did, *My soul wait thou only upon God, for my expectations are from him.* But how fit these sentiments are we shall more largely show in the next discourse.

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SERMON VIII.

DAVID'S REFLECTION ON THE EXTENT OF
GOD'S COMMANDMENTS.

PSALM cxix. 96.

I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad.

SERM. VIII. WE were, on the last Lord's day, taking a view (I hope some of us found it a heart-affecting view) of the narrow limits of what seems most excellent and perfect in creature enjoyments here below. We considered it as illustrated in the instance of David, by whom these words were uttered; David, no doubt one of the greatest, and, as one would imagine from some circumstances of his life, one of the happiest of mankind. We have considered him with respect to his personal and relative enjoyments; with respect to strength and beauty, genius and wealth, place and power. We viewed him, also, under the character of a husband, a father, a friend,

and a king; and we saw great mixtures of vanity run through all these views: there was not one of them in which he might not have said, *I have seen an end of all perfection.* And may not many of us likewise, and upon our own experience, say that these things are so. Though we never were placed in such a sphere as David was, yet we have, blessed be God, had our enjoyments: but what have they been, many of them, when compared with our expectations? Have we not had our disappointments too? disappointments, perhaps, often mingling themselves with our enjoyments? yea, indeed, what has not proved *vanity and vexation of spirit* when our expectations have risen high? And what shall we say to these things? shall we sit down in despair, and say there is no such thing as happiness to be found? *Then God has made all men in vain:* then existence is a privilege not worth possessing; and then rational creatures, in proportion to the degree in which their capacities are greater than those of the brutes, are more miserable than they. God forbid! No, let us hear *the conclusion of the whole matter*, and we shall

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find that if we are truly disposed to *fear God and keep his commandments*, a solid and lasting happiness may be found, mutable and transitory as the world is. If we may on the one hand say, with David, that we see the limits of all other perfection; we may add, with him too, *thy commandments are exceeding broad*; and accordingly that is the topic of our present discourse. Having,

I. Already considered the reflection which David made on the vanity of the creatures; let us consider,

II. The honourable testimony which he bore to true religion, and to the word of God, as the great support of it. *I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad.*

I will first consider the sense, and then the evidence of this assertion now before us.

I. I am to consider the sense of this assertion, that *God's commandment is exceeding broad.*

Now, I apprehend, in general, the sense is this, that the Divine revelation, as leading to God, and as practically influencing the mind,

opens upon it a wide and extended view of happiness, incomparably beyond any thing in the present world. SERM.
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1. By the command of God we are to understand a Divine revelation in general. This you may easily infer from observing that the variety of words made use of in this Psalm, *the law, the statutes, the commandment, the ordinance, the precept, the testimony, the word of God*, all signify the same thing, and all express the sacred oracles: but as almost every verse of this Psalm speaks of them, it is suitable, especially in the particular strain of this sacred composition, to use such a variety of phrases. It may be further intended to remind us of the various matter which it contains, its moral commands and precepts, its ceremonial ordinances and statutes, the sanction by which it is confirmed, and which God testifies, on the one hand and on the other, in the promises and the threatenings of it. And we may assure ourselves, that if it were true of those books of the sacred canon, which David had, that they are so incomparably excellent and valuable as David continually

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speaks them to be, it must be much more evidently so as it came to be enriched in succeeding ages, not only with his writings and those of the prophets which arose after him, but also with those of the apostles of our blessed Redeemer; when the gospel was added to the law; and not clothed in a dress of dark hieroglyphics, if I may so speak, and emblematic embroidery, as it was in those early days, but in all its brightest and clearest discovery, where with an *unveiled face we behold, as in this glass, the glory of the Lord.*

2. We must understand the Psalmist here to speak of the commandment of God, as directing our view to God, and engaging our practical regards.

The excellence and benefit of the Divine revelation evidently consists in this, that it teaches us to know God: and then only does it answer its end, when it engages us to love and to serve him. *If we know these things, happy are we if we do them*¹. But it is most apparent, that if the great practical design of the revelation be neglected, we must be the worse rather than the better for

¹ John
xiii. 17.

it. Those who, *having known the way of truth, have yet turned aside from the holy commandment, they whom God has known* in this distinguished sense, and bestowed those peculiar favours upon them, must, if they go on in their impiety, be expected to *be punished yet seven times more for their iniquities.* But this is so obvious a thought that I shall not long insist upon it: it is the less necessary, as I am now speaking of the views which it imparts; which if men pursue not, the greater is their guilt and folly. I add,

3. When David speaks of the commandment of God as *exceeding broad*, he must mean that it opens upon us a wide extended view of happiness, far superior to any thing which is to be found in the present world.

Were we to consider the phrase of *the breadth of the commandment* alone, it would be much more ambiguous, as it might signify how extensive it was in its demands, and that is an awful and an useful meditation: it reaches not only to our actions and words, but to our thoughts; it controls all the secret workings of the soul, and sets it in the presence and the eye of the great heart-searching God. It extends, also, to the whole course

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and series of our lives; and there is not a moment, when we are capable of any rational action and sentiment, in which we are not liable to its control; in which we are not to own, and to govern ourselves by its authority. O! that we may consider this, that we may be deeply affected with a view of our own deficiency; that we may see how far our own righteousness is from being adequate to the demands of a commandment of such exceeding breadth; and that we may be employed, by applying ourselves to Christ, whose obedience is as wide as is the extent of the law itself; and whose righteousness *is in and upon all them that believe, by which alone they obtain justification before God.* In this view, I say the words contain a great and important truth: but I apprehend that when we come to compare them with the former clause, they will be determined to another signification. In what respect could the command of God be broad, when compared to the limited view of perfection in the creature? Surely, as it opened unto us more extensive and important prospects, according to the paraphrase which I gave to you on the last Lord's day. "I soon see and find the

end of what appears to be greatest, fairest, and most promising in the world; but when I see what a happiness thou, Lord, art directing me to in thy word, I see no limits, no end of that: it promises to me an infinite good, an ocean of happiness, which flows on every side around me; and does, as it were, swallow me up in solid, complete, eternal felicity.”

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Let me, having thus explained these words, proceed now,

2. To show you the evidence of this assertion; or to show that “a soul convinced of the vanity of this world and all its enjoyments, may find that happiness in true religion, and in the word of God, when practically regarded, which it has not been able to find elsewhere.”

Now here you will observe that I am not to consider the excellency of the scriptures in general, which would indeed be an endless theme; but that I am to consider it in this particular point of light, with regard to the views which it gives to us of happiness to be obtained; or the noble prospects which it opens upon us, which quite disgrace and discountenance all pretences to perfection to

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be found in this world and its enjoyments. And here I shall endeavour more particularly to show you that the prospects which it gives to us are very great, and very sure.

1. The prospects which the word of God opens upon us are very grand, delightful, and noble; for it gives to us a view of an alliance with the great and blessed God, and of all the natural consequences of his friendship and favour, both in the present and in the future world: and if I could but illustrate this in a proper manner, you would be charmed and struck with it; and you would say, that a thousand such worlds as this, laid in the balance with it, were *lighter than vanity*.

1. The Divine word opens to us the view of an alliance with the great and ever blessed God.

The great design of God's speaking to us was to make himself known to us, that we might be more sensible than the light of nature alone could have made us, not only that he is, but what he is: that we might know more of his infinite perfections and glories. And to what purpose were they to be known? that we might be astonished and

terrified? that we might tremble and cry out, *Who unto us for we are undone, for our eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts; and who can stand before this holy God?* Great reason there is, in some views of the casē, for such reflections. But God could not intend this by the revelation which he made of himself: no; he intended to bring us into a friendly acquaintance with him, into a solemn league and covenant with himself. This is, indeed, a very surprising thing, a thing of which we cannot think and speak seriously without great amazement. But it is a most certain truth, that, pitying our weakness, our wanderings, and our misery, God has, as it were, spoken from heaven, that he might call us to himself: that he might bring us near, and join us to himself in most strict, gracious, and endearing bonds: this, you know to be his language, *Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear and your souls shall live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David*². And if you would know what kind of a covenant it is, another scripture will speak it, *This is the covenant I will make with them, I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their*

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² Isa. lv.
3.

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sins and their iniquities will I remember no more: and, I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. This is the covenant. And though these words, which I have quoted, were after the days of David, yet God, in effect, said all this, long before David was born, to his great ancestor Abraham, *I will establish my covenant with thee, and with thy seed after thee, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee and unto thy seed after thee.* Now, is there not something in this that seems very great? Is there not something in it that tends to fill the eye of the soul? to load the heart so that it shall be ready, as it were, to bow under this weight of glory? “The blessed God is pleased to take notice of me, of such a little contemptible worm as I: to speak of me as setting a kind of value on me, so that he avows his property in me, and says, *Thou art become mine. You are a peculiar treasure to me,* though all the earth and the heavens be mine. Is not this a great view of ourselves, to be thus owned and regarded by God? to have such a claim as this made to me? to be spoken of as forming a part of his treasure, who is the most *high God, the pos-*

essor of heaven and earth? This is much, but, blessed be God! it is not all. Not only to be possessed by God, but to possess him: not only to say, *I am the Lord's*, but to say, *God also is mine*. That, not content with all else that he has given to me before (and he has been giving to me all that I have, and has been every moment renewing his gifts), not contented with all this, that he must also give to me himself, and say, as he does, *I am Jehovah, even thy God*; and what follows, *open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it*³." These words seem to intimate that God demands it as a token of our gratitude to him, and condescends to own the relation of a God to us, that we should endeavour to enlarge our expectations, and form to ourselves some great views and ample wishes, and desires agreeably to that declaration. Accordingly I am to add,

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VIII.Ps. lxxxii.
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2d. The word of God gives to us a view of all the natural consequences of his friendship and favour, both in the present and in the future world.

It not only gives to us such a view of the Divine glory and perfections as may persuade us that something great and noble

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is to be expected, but it assists our conception, upon this part of the subject, with the hint of several of these happy consequences, both with respect to time and to eternity. It would be more than the employment of a whole discourse to insist upon these things at large; but I will give you a little specimen of what might be said of them if our time would allow.

With respect to the present world, it gives us reason to apprehend that God will guide us in our difficulties, that he will supply us in our wants, that he will defend us amidst dangers and temptations, that he will comfort us in sorrow, and that, finally, he will support us even in death itself. Need I refer you to particular passages relating to these blessed results of his favour? Who does not know that there are such? *I will guide thee with mine eye: thou saidst, Call to me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth. My God will supply all your wants. No good thing will he withhold from them that fear his name. God will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear. God comforts those whom he casts down; and when I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, &c.* How many scriptures parallel to

these might be mentioned upon this interesting topic?

Think, then, of the pious soul taking the survey, looking upon the uncertainty of life with these views. What a suitableness does it find in such declarations. Suppose it to be a young, and, in a great measure, an inexperienced person, setting out in the green of life, with that solicitude which thoughtful persons, in those circumstances, cannot but feel. What a suitable support is this: "I hope that God will guide me amidst all my uncertainties; that he will dispose circumstances in the course of his providence, or will make impressions on my mind by his Spirit; or will put a word into the mouth of his minister, which shall be as a voice behind me, saying, *This is the way, walk ye in it, when I am turning aside to the right hand or to the left.* I have little which I can call my own, or if I had ever so much, it is uncertain: my riches, were they ever so great, *might fly away as an eagle*, whose strength adds proportionable speed to his flight; *but the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*: he never can be at a loss for the most proper expedients for my relief, my content-

SERM. VIII. ment, and my delight. He will feed me with food convenient for me; and, if it be not always so delicate as I could wish, it will be so much the more wholesome, so much the more agreeable to what he knows the health of my soul may require and admit. Temptations will arise, and my spiritual enemies will supplant my steps. The world would afford them dangerous weapons to assault me, for from this magazine are their artillery drawn: but God can, and will enable me to vanquish them all. His secret strength, operating in my weakness; his holy Spirit, communicated to me to warn me of the various snares which surround me, and to animate me to break through them, will accomplish the blessed purpose: yes, God shall so overreach all the politics of Satan, that while he is assaulting me, and attempting to destroy me, he shall only give me an exercise by which the health of my soul shall be improved; and shall furnish out new matter to me of real victory and triumph. Sorrowful scenes may, indeed, arise: I see nothing which I may not lose: I can hardly think of any trial to which I may not be exposed. My worldly enjoyments may, each of them, afflict

me in proportion to the degree in which they delight me. But, O! adored be the riches of his grace! I have the joyful assurance that he will still be with me; and his gracious converse can delight my soul in the darkest, the most afflictive, the most calamitous circumstances. To feel my soul gladly drawn nearer to him, to express his gentle support in the painful and calamitous hour will be sweet indeed. What sufferings will not be overpaid if they prove the occasion of manifesting my Father's love? not even the last struggle shall terrify me; nor all the natural horrors of the dark *valley of the shadow of death, if thou art with me, and thy rod and thy staff comfort me*, as thy word teaches me humbly to hope that they will. The prospect is now changed: *I pass through the valley of Baca, and I make it a well as the rain fills the pools.* Thy presence, Lord! turns darkness into light to me, and death into life."

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The word of God, also, gives us a delightful view of the happy effects of the Divine friendship in the future and invisible world. It is not in this world that the noblest fruits of the Divine favour are to be obtained: O!

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what unworthy thoughts must we have of the blessed God, if we imagine it. That David had such views, by comparing one thing with another, is very plain: this I cannot say, that the Mosaic law contained any express promise of eternal life. David, nevertheless, expresses his hope of it in very high language, as he speaks of *rivers of pleasure at God's right hand*, in that world to which the Messiah was to ascend: so he declared it as his own great expectation, and as that which he set against the highest prosperity of the sinner, *As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness*. And how much the oracles of the New Testament illustrate this matter, and in how clear a light they place life and immortality, I have often had opportunity to show to you. Here, then, let us pause a little, and think of the state of a good man's mind when full of these blessed hopes. "Alas!" does he say, "I do not only see an end of all the perfection of happiness, with respect to my own personal share in it, but with respect to the whole race of men. When I am worn out, and laid in the grave, my possessions must be

consigned to others, and the rising race will enjoy those earthly pleasures which I, in my turn, have enjoyed and parted with for ever. But how long shall they enjoy them? Their turn also will soon be over, and thus it will go on for a few generations, very probably now not a great many, and then cometh the end; when not only this or that house, however well built, shall be demolished, this or that estate, however well gotten, wasted and lost; but when earth itself shall be destroyed, and all the works of men, and all the sports of human life shall utterly perish: *When the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all that is therein shall be burnt up;* and the ashes shall remain a more affecting monument of human vanity than any thing but the hand of God could erect. It shall not, however, be a monument of the vanity of my hopes. No; as when I quit my possessions and enjoyments here, I have an humble confidence in the Divine goodness, that he will receive my departed spirit as a spirit which he has honoured with his regard and love, so I also persuade myself, that when the end of all these things is

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come, he will remember me for good. His word gives us a reviving hope that I shall be his in the day when he makes up his jewels, and that in that day which shall burn as an oven, when the wicked and all that work iniquity shall be as stubble; that he will then cause the sun of righteousness to shine upon me with its fairest and brightest beams; that he will then own me as his servant, as his child, and that he will receive me, beyond the reach of any future change, to dwell in the immutable felicity of that glorious world where he reigns. And, O! what scenes of perfection will there open upon me! Turn thine eye, O my soul! from these shadows to dwell awhile on that prospect: but what a prospect is it? What an immense wilderness, how wide and broad, how infinite are the numbers of its inhabitants? How much beyond the view of Israel in its encampments, which Balaam had when he said, *Who can count its dust?* What views of God's bounty and love display themselves in all the various forms of glory and happiness in which saints and angels shine? What views of his own perfections and glory, in the sight which I shall then have of himself in that beatific

vision, when I shall be like to him, and shall see him as he is. God sheds abroad his mildest glory, reflected from the face of Christ: and I shall for ever be employed in contemplating and adoring those infinite and immutable perfections, of which I can see no end; no limit of the object; no limit of time to which my view of it shall not be continued; but I shall for ever gaze upon him with ever new and ever increasing delight, and in a complete assurance that he will for ever be *my God and my portion*. O! the breadth and extent of this happiness; and of that revelation which brings to me the tidings of it! O! *the height, and length, and breadth, and depth of that love of God in Christ*, which raises me to it, and passes my imperfect knowledge. O, my immortal soul! thou shalt never have exhausted this river of life with all thy repeated draughts."

Thus does the word of God nourish and elevate the soul; thus does it cheer and delight it; these views does it set before us, and thus does it form our relish to what is most pure and sublime, most amiable and honourable. It teaches us not, indeed, to acquire the world, but it does infinitely more

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in teaching us to contemn it. For how poor do all the enjoyments of sense appear, when viewed in competition with this felicity.— But is not this a golden dream? is there any reality or solidity in it? May a poor sinful mortal presume to speak thus of an alliance with the God of heaven; and of all those happy consequences of that alliance, not only in time, but also in eternity? Blessed be God! he may; for I am briefly to add;

2. That as these prospects are very grand and noble, so likewise are they very sure. So David says, *Thy testimonies are sure.* We have great satisfaction that they are God's testimonies, and his promises. He has given them by *holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost: yea, having in time past spoken to his people by the prophets, he has in these latter days spoken unto us by his Son:* who proved himself to be sent from God by his personal miracles; by his resurrection from the dead; by the operation of his Spirit on the apostles and private Christians; and by transmitting the sacred oracles to us with such evidence of their genuineness, and of their Divine authority, as are abundantly sufficient to

assure every candid inquirer, not leaving himself, in this degenerate age, without witness of their Divine power and efficacy upon the mind. *This is the record that God has given us, eternal life, and that this life is in his Son.* If the word of God be true, it cannot possibly be false that we are thus allied to God, if true and obedient believers; and that, in consequence of this alliance, such and such blessings are promised, and if promised surely they shall be performed. Can I question this? Are there not some of mankind, concerning whom I might say, "I am sure that I may depend upon this or that man's word; I am sure that he will not fail me?" And may I not much more say so of my God? Could any thing tempt him to raise a hope which he would not answer; to make a promise which he would not fulfill? Shall the wicked ever have that to object against the God of heaven? Far be that blasphemous supposition from our minds. No, as David says, *For ever, O Lord, thy word is seated in heaven, and thy faithfulness is throughout all generations;* it shall for ever remain immutable. David is dead, and the prophets are dead, and the apos-

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~ tles are dead, *but the word of God lives and abides for ever*; and that God, whose word it is, *is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever*. Therefore all those wide extended prospects which it opens upon me, are not Utopean regions, the seats of visionary felicity, reveries of a pleasing dream; but all make full, solid realities. Here is perfection, firmness, solidity; whereas the promises of this world are, like some sort of fruits, which wear a fine painted rind, while they are rotten at heart. Such reflections as these we have the justest reason to make, on this view of the subject; and now permit me,

III. To close all with a few hints by way of inference and improvement.

1. We may infer that we have great reason to be thankful for the word of God, which opens unto us such views of extensive and substantial happiness.

Adored be the grace of God, that he has given to us his word: that he has been pleased to speak from heaven, to send his messengers from age to age, to testify to his creatures, poor sinful creatures, that he had such kind

designs towards them: that he was willing to take them into an alliance with himself, and to do these amazing things for them: and, O blessed be his name! that he has sent this word to us, that he has sent it to Great Britain, and that we should live when he did it. You know how David was affected with this, *He has given his word to Jacob; his statutes and commandments to Israel, and has not dealt so with other nations.* To this day there are many to which he has not done so: many millions of mankind, who have never heard of a covenant made with God; never thought in their lives of being reconciled to him, and at length received to the perfect enjoyment of him in glory. The vanities of the world are their all. And of these some are very polite, learned, and luxurious nations, nations that have amongst them many of the choicest productions of nature; inhabiting southern climates, which produce rich fruits, spices, and gems: and others of them are poor barbarous people, that run about almost naked on their desert sands, or amidst their wild forests. But it matters little in which of these different climates a man is born,

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unless it be that, perhaps, the vanity of life, is more sensibly felt, and with greater anguish regretted, by the man who lives in its greatest abundance. The great difference between nation and nation is not that which climates or manners have made; no, nor that which has been made by sciences, by liberty, by laws, though these are glorious and important blessings; but that which is made by religion. This is the illustrious prerogative of here and there a nation to which God has given his word, and his gospel; and this is the prerogative of ours. "Yes," may the poor Christian say, "and by a further happiness it is dispensed all abroad. Poor as I am, one way or another, by purchase or by gift, I have a Bible, which I can call my own, which I can read in secret, and in which I find the most delightful company. I may not only come to public ordinances, sabbath after sabbath, and hear the word read and explained; but I have a Bible where I can revive my memory of those Divine truths, which, otherwise, I might lose, and by which I can try the doctrines that I hear: so drinking, as it were, at the fountain head. Lord, thy precepts are my delight and my

counsellors, and through them I get understanding, and am animated to aspire after those perfections, of which I have been hearing, with greater ardour and constancy. *I will bless thee for it while I live*; and though I leave it behind me when I enter the New Jerusalem, I will there *praise thee for ever and ever*, that I knew what it was to possess so invaluable a treasure, and that thy grace has given to me, as it were, a copy of it translated into my very soul."

2. It should certainly engage us to converse much with it.

You know that David was captivated with it: he expresses it often, especially in this Psalm, and particularly in the very next verse, *O, how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day*. "This commandment of thine, so broad, and that gives me such views of perfection, when I see the limits of creature comforts, does so possess itself of my heart, that I cannot express the pleasure that I take in conversing with it. I could spend all the day in reading it, or in thinking of it: it fills my heart, as it were, with a feeling of secret delight, an ardent, unutterable, transporting affection. O, how I love

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it, with what a relish I do, as it were, clasp it to my heart." Can you say so? I hope some of you can. O! make it your counsellor, make it your familiar companion, like that happy man *whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates thereon day and night*. This will fortify your hearts against the vanities of life, which might otherwise delude you, as they have deluded thousands and tens of thousands to their destruction. It is this that must nourish religion in your hearts; that must continue those impressions which these great objects, that we have been surveying, have made upon your souls, and keep them strong and lively. No one but he who has experienced it, knows what a tendency scripture has to enlarge and strengthen the mind. The noble ideas which the book of life suggests, pass not over it, like shadows flitting over a mirror, but stamp themselves deeply upon its essence, and become, as it were, parts of itself. May you, from your own experience, be able to bear testimony to the truth of this assertion.

3. We may further learn from hence the wisdom of God in permitting the world to

be so vain, when he has provided such a remedy against its vanity.

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Judge nothing before the time. David met with a great many difficulties and disappointments; but then he could say, and did say, *It has been good for me that I have been afflicted;* and many good men have had reason to apply this acknowledgment to themselves: yes, no doubt, my friends, many of you to whom I am now speaking. This is not the only place in which God is to display his bounty to his creatures; his love to his children. He has wise and good reasons for the mixture of vanity, trouble, and disappointment here to be found. By these grace is glorified, by this his people are secured to himself and fitted for the more perfect enjoyment of the final happiness which he intends for them. "Lord," may the good man say, "I meet with comfort enough in life, since I meet with as much as thou didst intend for me, and I should fear that creature enjoyment which would separate my soul from thee, and draw down my heart from heaven."

4. Let us learn from all, to have an especial and most joyful recourse to the word of

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God, when our dependence on the creature must evidently fail us. Then I am sure that we especially need it; *when heaviness in the heart of man makes it stoop we need a good word*, not so much from a human friend, though that be sweet, as from God himself, to make us glad. Let us therefore go thither, as David says, *This is my comfort in my affliction, thy word has quickened me*, has made me, as it were, to live again when I was just ready to sink. Learn, from what we have been saying, not to have any dependence upon any thing in this world; no, not upon the dearest friends in it; which are, after all, some of its best treasures. Suppose this or that friend should be removed, suppose it were a minister: suppose (which is a very supposable case) it were he who is now addressing you; this may happen, and yet it may be very well with your souls, perhaps much better than now. It matters not much by whom the word of God is spoken; it is the word itself on which the stress of your hope and comfort lies. As the apostle, when he had been saying, *All flesh is grass, &c. but the word of the Lord abides for ever*, even this word preached by the

gospel, and therefore your souls, if you have cordially received it, will love it whoever may die, whatever beside it may be taken away. I conclude, therefore, with these words of the apostle's, which I should think exceedingly proper, if I had the same apprehensions concerning you, as he had with respect to the Ephesians, whose face he was to see no more: *I commend you therefore, brethren, to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance amongst all them that are sanctified, even in that world where the end of perfection will never be seen.*

Christ's Invitation to thirsty Souls.

PREACHED AT NORTHAMPTON, IN 1729.



DEDICATION.

TO THE

REV. MR. JAMES HERVEY.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

It may perhaps surprise you, that amidst the familiarities of our intimate friendship I should, without any previous notice, address you thus publicly from the press. I am not without some apprehension, that your modesty may be a little distressed on the occasion: but I am persuaded, you will on the whole forgive the desire I had, that all, to whom this little piece may come, should know, what most who are personally acquainted with us both already know, that I most highly esteem you, and most affectionately love you; and that no diversity in our professions and forms could prevent our entering into

the strictest bonds of friendship, or make me unwilling most openly to profess it, and to perpetuate the memory of it, while this shall remain.

I am sorry to say, the temper that generally prevails is of such a nature as to prohibit intimacies of this kind, and too frequently to occasion aversions, where there is no other cause of them than a variety of religious sentiments and practices. But it is our happiness, that we apprehend that temper to be as unreasonable as it is unlovely. And surely all thinking men would see it in the same view, if they would but seriously compare the importance of those things wherein we agree with that of those in which we differ; especially if they would farther reflect, that the very same principles, under different views, promote, in conscientious men, those different practices, which, forgetting those principles, fundamental as they are to all true religion, the professors of it are so apt to contend about.

You, my pious and honoured friend, being, I doubt not, in your own mind persuaded, that Diocesan Episcopacy is of divine original, and that the church hath authority to decree rites and ceremonies, and to determine controversies in matters of faith, have solemnly declared

that belief; and in consequence of it, have obliged yourself to render canonical obedience to those, whom you thereby acknowledge as governing you by an authority delegated from Christ; that thus you may *be subject to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake*, and thereby approve your submission to him. I have declined that subjection, not from any disrespect to the persons of the established ecclesiastical governors (many of whom I hold in the highest esteem, and number among the most distinguished ornaments of our common Christianity), and least of all from any unwillingness to yield subjection, where I apprehend Christ to have appointed it: for, so far as I know my own heart, it would be my greatest joy, to bow with all humility to any authority delegated from him. But I will freely tell you and the world, my nonconformity is founded on this, that I assuredly believe the contrary to what the constitution of the Church of England requires me to declare, on the above-mentioned heads, and on some others, to be the truth: and I esteem it much more eligible, to remain under an incapacity of sharing its honours and revenues, than to open my way to a possibility of obtaining them by what would in me, while I have such apprehensions, be undoubtedly an

act of prevarication, hypocrisy, and falsehood; reverencing herein the authority of God, and remembering the account I must shortly give up in his presence.

Thus, sir, on the whole, we both choose what we apprehend God requires; we both adhere to that discipline, which we believe to have been primitive; or, where you give it up in some instances, it is with an upright desire, I doubt not, of conforming to what you judge to be the leading and most important articles: but we both desire, that the communion of the church may be pure, and the form of its discipline and worship truly apostolical; and would exert the power, of which we each of us think ourselves regularly possessed, to make and keep it so; though we do not estimate our respective powers alike. We pray in different words and manners; we preach in different habits; we receive the sacred supper in different postures: but we both preach *repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*, regeneration and sanctification by his Spirit, and subjection to his laws, and particularly to that distinguishing law of mutual love. We both address the same God, in the name of the same Mediator; and the great blessings we ask are in the main the same. We both commemorate

the death of Christ as our propitiatory sacrifice, resting our own souls, and directing our people to rest theirs, on the atonement he hath made, and the complete righteousness which he hath wrought. Thus joining in love to him as our common Saviour, and *living the life which we live in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God*, we are both *waiting for his salvation*; expecting that ere long our spirits will be joined, in the general assembly and church of those who die in the Lord (that assembly, where perfect knowledge and love cement in everlasting bands the souls that once differed, as widely as they could differ who were one in Christ); where we hope, through divine grace, to share ages of delight, till our bodies shall be in the same moment borne from the dust, to inherit in our complete persons the everlasting kingdom of our heavenly Father. And in the mean time, why should it be thought strange, that amidst so many endearing bonds of union, our thoughts are hardly at leisure, to recollect the little circumstances in which we differ? Surely the part we are acting under these different denominations is far more pleasing to God, more comfortable to ourselves, and more edifying to the world, than if you, dear sir, were to *set at naught your brother* for his nonconformity, or I

to *judge mine* for his conformity; and we were to infect, not to say poison, the streams of God's sanctuary, where we respectively preside, with the bitterness of contention, censure, and reproach.

I assuredly believe, my worthy brother, that in what I have now been writing with so unusual a freedom, and in what I thought I might in this connection write with some peculiar advantage, I have uttered your sentiments as well as my own. And surely, were they more generally to prevail, the face of our religious interests in Great Britain would wear a more pleasing and more hopeful aspect. Were our hearts thus filled with a desire of approaching to each other, and disposed on one hand and the other to sacrifice, as far as with a safe conscience we could, the circumstances that divide us, where we are divided, love might perhaps find means of union, at present unthought of by most. Or, in the mean time, our worshipping in different places under different forms, might be no more pernicious to the peace and prosperity of the church than our worshipping in different places, according to the same ritual; which the greatest imaginable conformity cannot possibly prevent, till we all come to the general assembly, and join the innumerable

multitude that surround the throne of the Lamb, in that celestial temple, to which, with all the people of God below, we daily aspire.

To this blessed end, I trust, through Divine grace, our prayers, our discourses, our writings, and our examples will still be tending; and, blessed be God, that there are so many excellent persons in both communions, whose hands and hearts are joining with ours, in the prosecution of it. May their numbers, their zeal, and their charity be daily growing! And may God establish your health, dear sir, which is now in so tender a state, that you may long be capable of bearing your important part in so noble a work; that the parish in which you labour, or some other that may afford you a yet larger sphere of usefulness, may be happy to distant years in your edifying sermons, and in those private instructions which you are, with so exemplary, and, oh! that I could not say, with so uncommon a zeal, adding to those which you address to them from the pulpit! Be assured, sir, that no man living can more sincerely rejoice in the acceptance of your labours, and particularly in that great and general admiration in which your pious and excellent contemplations are so justly held, by persons of almost every rank and genius, education and profes-

sion; so that the warmest friendship can hardly dictate a higher wish relating to them than that they may be as useful, as they are delightful, to all your readers.

As for the sermon, with which I here present you, it was preached near twenty years ago, and has long lain by me transcribed among several others, which I have prepared for the press, that if surviving friends should desire it, they may be offered to the world after my death. It is now published at the importunate request of a worthy member of the established church, to whom in the intimacy of our friendship it had been communicated, and who has himself been very deeply impressed with the representation of the important truths which are handled in it. My obligations to him, and my regard for his judgment, would not permit me to dispute such a point with him: and I was the more ready to comply with his desire, as something of a peculiar blessing seemed to attend the discourse, when delivered from the pulpit; and that to such a degree, as I do not know to have been equalled by any other sermon I ever preached. This encourages me to hope, that plain as it is, and destitute of almost every charm that might recommend it to a modern taste, the perusal of it may be useful

towards promoting the great end of the Christian ministry; which undoubtedly is, to bring men to a proper application to that compassionate Saviour whose overflowing goodness is here celebrated, and by that means to lead them to every grace and virtue, as the genuine fruit of faith, and of that love which will naturally be connected with it. I will not call this, the grand secret of reforming the world; for, blessed be God, it is not a secret; but it is the mighty instrument, which Divine mercy has put into the hands of the ministers of Jesus, to accomplish ends which all the wisdom of ancient and modern philosophers has attempted in vain; and God is to this day *bearing testimony to the word of his grace*. Yes, dear sir, I will never be ashamed to confess it, that I have the joy to see in your assemblies and in ours, that where these doctrines are faithfully and effectually preached, they rise, like the warm beams of the sun on the face of the earth, benumbed by the rigour of winter, and call forth into verdure, beauty, and fragrancy, a thousand excellent productions, the very seeds of which would otherwise have perished. Renew, my worthy friend, the ardour of your prayers, that *the God of the spirits of all flesh* may every where excite a multitude of enlight-

ened and animated witnesses, to these vital truths of his everlasting gospel; and that his blessing may attend every effort for the advancement of this sacred cause: and particularly, that it may, notwithstanding all its imperfections, attend this humble attempt, from the hand of,

Reverend and dear Sir,

Your affectionate brother

in the work of the Christian ministry,

and ever faithful friend and servant,

P. DODDRIDGE.

Northampton,
September 18, 1748.

SERMON IX.

CHRIST'S INVITATION TO THIRSTY SOULS.

 JOHN, vii. 37.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

ALL the words of our blessed Redeemer deserve our very serious regard; for, his enemies themselves being judges, *Never man spake as he did*¹. But there is something in the words now before us, which may justly challenge a peculiar attention; as they were not spoken in ordinary converse, or to a little circle of domestic friends, but delivered in the temple, with a loud voice, on a solemn day, and in the midst of a very numerous assembly. *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, or made proclamation, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*

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Ver. 46.

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It is plain from the second verse, that the feast here spoken of is the feast of tabernacles; which was instituted in commemoration of God's giving the law to *Israel*, and conducting them through the wilderness, where they *dwelt in tents*². The feast lasted eight days: most of the former of them were spent in tabernacles, or arbours made up of branches of the most shady trees, and adorned with the finest flowers and fruits which that delightful country afforded in the month of September. It is not improbable but on all these days the pious worshippers would sometimes quit these pleasant retreats, to attend the services of the temple: but it was the express command of God that *The whole eighth day* should be spent there, that being *a holy convocation*³, on which, besides other institutions then to be attended, the whole law was to be read over in the audience of all the people, from the original copy which was laid up in the holy of holies⁴. This was *the last day, that great day of the feast*, which the evangelist mentions in the words before us.

The Jewish writers assure us* that, to-

* Talm. Tract. Chill. ap Trem. in Loc.

wards the latter end of their commonwealth, they had a peculiar ceremony on this day, to which our Lord may probably here refer.

After they had surrounded the altar seven times, with palm branches in their hands, and hosannas of praise, some of the Levites used to pour out, in the court of the temple, a considerable quantity of water, drawn from the fountain of Siloam; the people in the mean time singing those words of Isaiah, *With joy shall they draw water out of the wells of salvation*⁵. It is very probable they did this, as a token of their expectation and desire of the Messiah's appearance; who was to *sprinkle many nations*⁶, to *pour water on him that was thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground*⁷.

It was probably during the time of this ceremony, or immediately after it, that our Lord *stood up*, perhaps on some eminence (as the priest, who made this libation did *), and *cried*, or proclaimed, with a loud and distinct voice, these gracious and important words, *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink*, q. d. "You all believe the promises of the Messiah, and you have invented

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⁵ Isa. xii.
3.

⁶ Isa. lii.
15.

⁷ Isa. xliii.
3.

* Reland. Antiq. Heb. iv. c. 6.

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this rite as a token that you expect his coming, and long for the effusion of the Spirit, which is then to be bestowed. Behold in me the person whom you profess so eagerly to expect. *He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath in effect said in many places** (or he who has that faith in me which the scripture requires), *out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*, that is, he shall receive the communications of the Spirit, in such abundant degrees, as shall not only be refreshing to himself, but shall render him capable of administering, in the freest and most plentiful manner, to the comfort and edification of others. So richly shall he be furnished with its gifts and graces, that spiritual instructions and consolations shall flow from him †, like water from a fountain, which

* For I do not apprehend, with Mr. Whiston, that our Lord refers to some passage that is lost.

† *Out of his belly*, that is, from within—here from the soul. Comp. Job. xv. 35. *Their belly*, that is, mind, *prepareth deceit*. Job, xx. 20. *He shall not feel quietness in his belly*, that is, his conscience. Prov. xx. 27. *The candle of the Lord searcheth the inward parts of the belly*, that is, mind. Ibid. ver. 30. *Stripes cleanse the inward parts of the belly*; that is, afflictions may be the means of purifying the soul.

branches itself out into mighty rivers." Thus the evangelist himself teaches us to expound these words, when he says, ver. 39, *This he spake of the Spirit, which they who believed on him should receive.* SERM.
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Our Lord speaks of the Spirit here: but we must remember that it is not in an abstracted view, as separate from, but as in conjunction with the other blessings of his gospel, and as preparatory to a state of eternal happiness. And therefore these words, in which the blessed Jesus expresseth his ability and readiness to bestow the Spirit, do evidently imply that he is both able and willing to impart all the blessings of this gospel, to all those who do sincerely desire them; and this without any exception. A glorious truth! The epitome of the gospel, and the hope and life of our souls! Which in an humble dependance on Divine influences I shall now endeavour to illustrate and confirm. I will,

I. Show you that the springs of the most valuable blessings are in Christ.

II. Prove that he is not as a fountain sealed, but diffuses these streams with a

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III. I shall add some practical reflections.

I. I am to show you, that the springs of the most valuable blessings are in Christ; so that he is abundantly able to refresh the thirsty soul.

My brethren, I may say in the name of my great Master, as was said to Israel of old, *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it*⁸.

⁸ Ps. lxxxii.

10.

Extend your desires to the utmost boundaries, that are consistent with reason and piety, and from him you may receive the most copious supply; for he *is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask*

⁹ Eph. iii. *or think*⁹.

20.

I will not enlarge on the general proof of this fundamental truth, which so often occurs. I will not speak particularly of *the fulness of Godhead which dwells in him*

¹ Col. ii. *bodily*¹; nor of that communicated *fulness*

9.

which is treasured up in him as man and ² Col. i. *Mediator, by the pleasure of the Father*², of which *we have all received, even grace for*

19.

³ John i. *grace, that is, an abundance of grace*³. I

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aim, in my present discourse, not so much at enlightening the understanding in the evidence of a doctrine so universally allowed among all professing Christians, as at affecting your heart, and my own, with a sense of what, even while we acknowledge, we are all so prone to forget. SERM.
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Let me entreat you then to reflect, on this occasion, what are those blessings which a rational soul would most eagerly desire, most ardently thirst after. You will immediately reply, if you know God and yourselves, "We are guilty creatures, and we need a pardon; so need it, as to be for ever undone without it. We are naturally indigent and dependant, and we need an interest in the constant paternal care of the great Author of our being. We are polluted, weak and disconsolate, and we need the energy of the Divine Spirit, to purify, to strengthen, and to revive us. We are immortal creatures, on the borders of the grave, through which we are shortly to enter on the eternal world; and therefore we need, and cannot but earnestly desire an interest in that future and unchangeable happiness." My friends, if this be your judgment, it is according to

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truth; may these desires be continually growing in your souls! for, be the thirst ever so impatient, the streams which flow from this living fountain are abundantly sufficient to relieve it.

1. Do you thirst for the pardon of sin? From the Lord Jesus Christ you may receive a supply.

Inconsiderable as this may seem to the careless sinner, whose *eyes are sleeping the sleep of death*, to the enlightened soul it cannot but appear of infinite importance. When once convictions take hold of the heart, when the sacred law of the eternal God is thrown open in all its extent and all its purity, and conscience charges us with our violations of it; when that awful hand appears to write *Tekel* against us, *thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting*, no wonder if trembling and astonishment seize us; no wonder if even our *joints are loosed, and our knees smite one against another*⁴; when angry Omnipotence appears, as it were, rising against us in all its terrors, and hell seems to open its mouth to devour us. Well may other cares and passions be lost in this, as the rustling of a leaf in the report of thun-

⁴ Dan. v.
6. 27.

der. Accordingly the awakened sinner is represented as inquiring, not after a blessing out of the corn-floor and the wine-press, not saying, *What shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?* but as possessed by other thoughts, which now appear of infinitely greater moment, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God?* He is represented as willing, if possible, to purchase a pardon, not only at the expense of the most costly offerings, *with thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil,* were they at his disposal, but with a sacrifice abundantly more precious than these: *Shall I give, says he, my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*⁵ Mic. vi. 6, 7. David speaks of himself as thirsting for pardon, when he says, under a sense of guilt, *Whilst I kept silence my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long; for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, my moisture was turned into the drought of summer.*⁶ It was like an envenomed arrow shot Ps. xxxii. 3, 4. into his soul, the poison of which diffused itself through all his veins, and even drank up the vital spirits.

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Now if any of you have felt, or do now feel, this raging thirst, if you experimentally know that restlessness of mind which is the inseparable attendant of such a circumstance, it must be matter of joy to hear that the blessed Jesus can allay these eager desires, can sweetly compose the soul in the midst of these painful agonies, by that *blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than* ⁷ *the blood of Abel*⁷. We are expressly told, ^{24.} that *in him we have redemption through his* ⁸ *blood, even the forgiveness of our sins*⁸; that ^{7.} *God hath exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of* ⁹ *sins*⁹; and that by him we may be justified, ^{31.} not only from the slighter irregularities of life, but from the greatest enormities of it, even *from all those things from which we could* ¹ *not be justified by the law of Moses*¹; for which that dispensation appointed no expiatory sacrifices, but condemned the offender ² *to die without mercy*².

² Heb. x.
^{28.}

2. Do you thirst for the favour of God? Our Lord Jesus Christ is able to introduce you to it.

It is most evident, that this is in its own nature infinitely desirable; and when the

eyes of a man's understanding are enlightened, SERM. IX.
it will undoubtedly appear so. "And is there," will he immediately cry out, "is there indeed a being of infinite perfection and glory, the overflowing eternal fountain of happiness? And will he communicate of himself to mortal and to sinful creatures? Will he not only sheath the flaming sword of his vengeance, but extend the golden sceptre of his grace? Will he not only sign the pardon of such ungrateful rebels, but even adopt them into the number of his children? How does my soul long to look upwards, and call him my Father! Happy creatures, whom he admits into such a relation, to whom he reveals himself under so endearing a character! Happy creatures indeed, that can go out, and come in, that can lie down, and rise up, under the impression of this glorious transporting thought, God is ever surrounding us with his favourable presence, is ever with us a father and a friend? O that this happiness were mine! How rich should I be in such a portion, though I were stripped of my earthly all, and sent out hungry and hardly bestead, to *seek my bread in*

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desolate places! Let unthinking wretches say, *Who will show us any temporal good; but while I have a voice to express, and a soul to form a desire, this shall be its language, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me³!*"

³ Psa. iv.
6, 7.

This, my friends, is the tendency of the soul to its proper centre; and as it is of all others the most natural, so in a sanctified heart it is of all others the most forcible and lively. Therefore this kind of desires is represented in scripture, by the most eager and impatient thirst, even that of a hunted deer after refreshing streams: *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come*

and appear before God⁴! And elsewhere,

^{1, 2.}

My soul thirsteth for God: my flesh longeth for thee, as in a dry and thirsty land, where

no water is⁵: "The thirsty pilgrim cannot

^{1.}

long more for cooling streams, when parched up in a sandy desert, than I for thee." Nay, the ardour of his desire is represented as extorting a passionate cry, *My heart and my*

⁶ Psa.

flesh crieth out for the living God⁶.

lxxxiv. 2.

Do you, my friends, feel any such holy breathings? Can you adopt these pathetic words of David, as expressive of the inward sentiments of your soul? Blessed be God, they are not hopeless desires! The Lord Jesus Christ is the sacred channel, through which the waters of life flow, from the everlasting, inexhaustible fountain! It was the very business which he came into the world about, to establish a friendship between God and his apostate creatures. Therefore we are expressly told, that God *hath made us accepted in the beloved*⁷: and our Lord as-

⁷ Eph. i.
6.

3. Do you thirst for the communications of the Spirit? The Lord Jesus Christ can abundantly relieve you.

⁸ John xiv.
23.

Are you sensible of those pollutions, which have overspread your souls, and have sullied the original beauties of them? Are you mourning over *a law in your members, which wars against that of your minds*⁹? Are you

⁹ Rom. vii.
23.

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complaining of the weakness of your degenerate natures, that when *to will is present with you, how to perform that which is good you find not*¹? Are gloomy apprehensions arising in your minds in consequence of such disorders? Do you tremble under the fears of Divine displeasure, already suspecting the safety of your state, or fearing lest you should lose what you have attained? It is evident you need the influences of the Spirit, whose office it is to purify, to invigorate, and to cheer the soul. Now it is from the Lord Jesus Christ that this Spirit is to be communicated, and therefore it is called *the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*²; and it is said, that *of his fulness we have all received grace for grace*; as I before observed. And for this very reason, because the Spirit was purchased by his blood, is treasured up in his hand, and dispensed by him; all the blessed operations produced by his agency are ascribed to Christ, by whom it is declared that the soul is sanctified, strengthened, and comforted. *Christ of God is made unto us sanctification*³. I, says the apostle, *can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me*⁴. *Our consolations abound through*

¹ Rom. vii.
18.

² Phil. i.
19.

³ 1 Cor. i.
30.

⁴ Phil. iv.
13.

*Christ*⁵. It was the more proper and necessary to insist on this, as the text doth so immediately relate to the supplies of the Spirit.

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5 2 Cor. i.
5.

4. Do you thirst for the joys and glories of the heavenly world? The Lord Jesus Christ is able to relieve you.

One would think, it were absolutely impossible to believe them, and not ardently to desire a share in them. One would think, that when we have been taking the most transient survey of the land of promise, as delineated in the word of God, we should immediately cry out, as Moses in the views of an earthly Canaan, *I pray thee let me go over, and see that pleasant land, which is beyond Jordan, even that goodly mountain, and Lebanon*⁶. “It is delightful to view it from hence; but O, when shall I enter upon it! When shall I taste those pleasures of which I now hear, and drink of those refreshing streams which shine so beautiful in the distant prospect.” *We*, says the apostle, *who are in this tabernacle, do groan, being burdened; not that we may be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality may be swallowed up of life*⁷. And if we are thus thirsting for

6 Dent. iii.
25.

7 2 Cor. v.
4.

SERM. IX. expected glory, *to whom should we go* but to that Redeemer, who *has the words of eternal life*⁸. He is the Lord of both worlds, and heaven as well as earth is subject to his command. *All power is given unto him, both in heaven and upon earth*⁹. Let him but give forth the sovereign word, and the golden gates, the everlasting doors, shall be lifted up to admit us, and a throne of glory erected, radiant and exalted as he shall ordain. He therefore speaks of it as his peculiar office, and certain care, to prepare seats and abodes of felicity for his people in the invisible world, and at length to translate them thither. *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am there you may be also*¹.

⁸ John vi. 68.
⁹ Matt. xxviii. 18.
¹ John xiv. 2, 3.

I hope this may be sufficient to prove, that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to satisfy the most important desires of the soul, and to allay its most eager thirst—for the pardon of sin,—the favour of God,—the communications of the Spirit,—and the happiness of the future state. “It is true,” will the hum-

ble soul say, “I firmly believe the springs of the most valuable blessings are in him; but have I any encouragement to hope, that he will open them for the relief of so mean and so unworthy a creature as I?” This is the business of my second general, viz.

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II. To prove, that the Lord Jesus is willing to communicate of these living streams with a Divine freedom, for the refreshment of every humble soul who sincerely thirsts after them.

Blessed be God, there is a cloud of witnesses to attest a truth in which our hopes for time and for eternity are so nearly concerned. I appeal to the invitations, to the Spirit, to the tears, to the blood of the great Redeemer, and to the experience of every pious soul in heaven and on earth.

1. Let the invitations of Christ witness, that he is ready to relieve thirsty souls.

The gospel-times are described in the prophetic writings, as times of extraordinary plenty, in which the most nourishing and delightful provision should be offered to all, in the most generous and liberal manner. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the*

SERM. IX. *waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy wine and milk without money, and without*

¹ Isa. lv. *price*². And if we look into the history of

1. the Evangelists, we shall see the prophecy accomplished in its fullest extent. For we shall there find our blessed Redeemer publishing the free and unlimited offers of his grace, to all that were willing to accept it.

You cannot be strangers to the passages I refer to: *Come unto me, all ye that labour*

³ Matt. xi. *and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*³:

28. *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise, or*

⁴ John vi. *on no account whatsoever, cast out*⁴. And

37. in the text it is proclaimed, before the most numerous assembly, on a most public occasion, *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink*. Can any invitation be more

general, more intelligible, more affecting than these? Hardly should we have imagined it possible, unless we had in some respects seen yet more pathetic declarations than even those I have now recited. Yes, my friends, our Lord Jesus Christ knew the weakness of our minds, and seems to have been aware of a foolish scruple which might possibly arise in them. We might, perhaps, have been ready to say, "The blessed Jesus

was indeed in a surprising degree tender and compassionate, whilst he dwelt on earth, and was himself surrounded with all the innocent infirmities of our nature: but can we be sure, that he retains the same overflowing tenderness now he is returned to the regions of glory, and surrounded with all the dignity and pleasure of so exalted a station, and all the employments which attended so high an administration?" To obviate even this suspicion, ungrounded as it is, he has been pleased, since his ascension and exaltation, to send us repeated messages of love: and he speaks from the throne of his glory in as condescending and endearing language, as he ever appears to have used in his humblest abasement. And to awaken our attention, and to confirm our faith, he introduces the declaration with a very solemn preface, of which the beloved disciple takes care to give us a particular account. *He said unto me, write, q. d.* Let it be recorded for the instruction and consolation of the remotest ages; *for these words*, which I am now about to utter, *are true and faithful*, and therefore may be entirely depended upon, as the foun-

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what are these important words? *And he said, it is done*: the great work is now accomplished, the redemption is complete: *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end*, whose nature and promises are for ever the same; and in consequence of all this, *I will give to him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely*⁵. To the same purpose are those remarkable words in the next chapter, so near the close of the canon of scripture, *I Jesus have sent mine angel, or messenger, to testify these things unto the churches*, as things in which all the churches are most intimately concerned; and to give the greater weight to them, let it be remembered, *I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star*. And observe, whither so pompous an introduction tends, and where it centres: *The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come*; for whoever he be, he may join in proclaiming the invitation: *Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely*⁶. My brethren, had our Lord allowed

⁵ Rev. xxi.
5, 6.

⁶ Rev. xxii.
16, 17.

us, as it were, to choose for ourselves, and to dictate to him in what words he should express himself to us, to silence every doubt, and to banish every fear, I cannot imagine that we could have found any more expressive form of speech than this, *Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.* And can we suspect, that the Lord of truth and of glory would speak a language foreign to his heart? that he would mock and delude unhappy mortals with insincere proposals, and airy hopes? That be far from him, and the thought be far from us! *Hath he spoken, and shall he not do it? Hath he promised, and shall he not make it good?* But further,

2. Let the Spirit of Christ witness his readiness to relieve thirsty souls.

I know there is a great deal of difference between the common operations of the Spirit on the minds of those who continue obstinate and impenitent, and those special influences by which he sweetly but powerfully subdues the hearts of those who are *chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world.* Yet I am persuaded, that none to whom the gospel comes are utterly neglected

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by that sacred Agent. It is observable to this purpose, that Stephen charges it upon the Jews, that *they* and their *fathers had always resisted the Holy Ghost*⁷. Now this charge of *resisting* him plainly supposeth, that he had still been striving with them; for if there had been no attempt on the one hand, there could have been no resistance on the other. If then the Spirit of God wrought in some degree on all the Jews, throughout every age and period of their state, it seems highly reasonable to believe, that he works on those who enjoy the gospel now; since this dispensation, with special reference to the extraordinary effusions of the Holy Ghost, is called by the apostle, *the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*⁸.

⁷ Acts vii.
51.

⁸ Rom. viii.
2.

For the farther confirmation of this, I question not, but I might appeal to the experience of every one that hears me this day. Surely none of you that are come to years of discretion, have always been unaffected with divine things. Some impressions have been made, some convictions awakened, some purposes formed: and in all these instances God is drawing you, and *the Spirit says, Come*. Now, as the Spirit operates under

the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ, these calls of the Spirit are to be considered as evidences of that readiness in Christ to bestow the blessings of the gospel, which I am now endeavouring to prove.

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3. Let the tears of Christ witness his readiness to relieve those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

If we have not some very inveterate suspicion of a person's insincerity and artifice, we readily believe, that his heart is touched when we see the tears flow from his eyes. Behold then the tears of a Redeemer over perishing souls, and judge by them of the compassions of his heart! You know that celebrated instance, when *he beheld Jerusalem and wept over it*⁹. Our Lord was then in a triumphant procession, attended by acclamations of the people, who were shouting, *Hosanna to the Son of David*: and as for Jerusalem, which he beheld from the Mount of Olives, it was a city polluted with enormous crimes, and the abode of his most implacable enemies, who were then actually conspiring his murder, which he knew they would in a few days effect. Justly might he have triumphed in that approaching ruin,

⁹Luke xix.
41, 42.

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which he knew a righteous God would bring upon them, for that as well as their other provocations. But behold his compassion! Instead of insulting, *he weeps over* them, and says, *If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, which even yet is continued, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.* The natural broken language of genuine and overflowing sorrow! Surely nothing can be more melting than such tears, falling from such eyes, and in such circumstances. And if our Lord could not give up the impenitent sinners of Jerusalem without weeping over them, surely he will not despise the humble and penitent soul, who is, perhaps with tears, seeking his favour, and flying to his grace as his only refuge.

4. Let the blood of Christ witness, that he is ready to impart the blessings of his gospel.

The tears of our blessed Redeemer must needs be convincing and affecting, if the mind be not sunk into an almost incredible stupidity; but his blood is still more so. View him, my brethren, not only in the previous scenes of his abasement, his descent

from heaven, and his abode on earth; but view him on Mount Calvary, extended on the cross, torn with thorns, wounded with nails, pierced with a spear; and then say, whether there be not a voice in each of these sacred wounds, which loudly proclaims the tenderness of his heart, and demonstrates, beyond all possibility of dispute or suspicion, his readiness to relieve the distressed soul that cries to him for the blessings of the gospel. He died to purchase them, not for himself, but for us; and can it be thought he will be unwilling to bestow them? We may well conclude that he *loved us*, since he shed *his blood to wash us from our sins*¹. For *greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*²; but he hath commended his love towards us, hath set it off by this illustrious and surprising circumstance, *that while we were strangers and enemies he hath died for us*³.

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¹ Rev. i. 5.

² John xv.
13.

³ Rom. v.
8.

5. Let the experience of every pious soul, whether on earth or in heaven, witness the readiness of Christ to communicate the blessings of his gospel for the relief of those who thirst for them.

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Could we lift up our eyes to the regions of glory, and count all the happy spirits which are arrived there from these abodes of darkness and sorrow, we should find in each of them an everlasting witness and monument of the great truth I am now labouring to assert. Should we behold them in their robes of majesty, with their golden crowns, and their victorious palms, and inquire as the apostle did, *Who are these that are clothed in white robes, and from whence do they come?* The answer would be the same: *These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*⁴. They have found him both a powerful and a compassionate Saviour, and therefore they are fixed in a state of undecaying felicity. And some of them could confess even the blackest crimes, committed before they were brought to an acquaintance with him; but they were no bars in the way of that grace, which is extended and magnified, even to the chief of sinners.

⁴ Rev. vii.
13, 14.

The experience of the saints in heaven witnesseth this; and the experience of the saints on earth doth, as it were, echo back

their testimony. Would you have living, and visible witnesses? Blessed be God, they are not wanting: I hope, I may add, they are not far distant; and with regard to many of you that hear me this day, I hope and trust, that you have the witness within you. I doubt not, but several in this assembly may say, *as we have heard, so have we seen and felt*: many a one, that may lay his hand on his breast, and cry out in the words of the Psalmist, *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him from all his trouble*⁵, from that which was incomparably more than all the rest. “Oppressed with a burden of grief and of fear, I threw myself at the feet of a Redeemer, and he gently raised me; he kindly embraced me; he smiled upon my soul, and said, by the voice of his blessed Spirit, *Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.*” What can we oppose to such a cloud of witnesses? Let us cheerfully admit the evidence. Let us joyfully trust the power and the grace of him, who this day renews his compassionate invitation, and says, *and crieth*, as in the text, *If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*

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⁵Ps. xxxiv.
6.

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III. I conclude with a more particular application.

And here I would address myself,—to those who do not yet thirst after gospel-blessings,—to those who are now thirsting after them,—and to those who have already received some refreshment.

1. Let me apply myself to those who do not yet thirst after the blessings of the gospel.

And are there none of that character among you? Are there none in this assembly, who hear me with negligence and coldness, and know in their own conscience that the bent of their desires and pursuits is directed quite another way? My friends, I have a message from God to you; and I would entreat you, that you would suffer your consciences to answer these two questions, plain indeed, but of infinite importance.—Are not the blessings which Christ offers worth thirsting for?—And is not the time approaching, when, if you persist in your present neglect, you will thirst for them in vain?

Are your souls sunk into so degenerate a taste, and are you so divested of the common

reason of men, as not to see that the blessings proposed are highly excellent, and well worthy the most ardent desire, and the most vigorous pursuit, of every guilty yet immortal creature? Is it not truly desirable, that our guilt should be cancelled, that the displeasure of God should be averted, and his favour secured? And that our souls should be purified, strengthened, and supported by Divine consolations now, until they are conducted to a state of everlasting happiness? Is it not desirable, that a creature made for a perpetual duration, should have some more stable and permanent happiness than this mortal life?

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You know in your own consciences, that these things are truly desirable: and would to God, you would seriously compare them with those vain cares, and those sordid pleasures, for the sake of which you neglect and despise them. How utterly contemptible would those cares and pleasures appear! How unworthy even of a mention or a thought, when brought into such a comparison!

But let me farther inquire, is not the time approaching, when you will thirst for these

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blessings in vain? You are now insensible of your need of them, and lose yourselves in a variety of amusing dreams, in which you fancy you are possessed of some considerable happiness. But, wretched creatures, in a few years at most, death will awaken you; and then you will know the value of those blessings which you now despise; then you will feel an insatiable thirst after them. Your case will then appear exactly like that described by the prophet, *As when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awaketh, and is not satisfied; or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh, but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite*⁶. The appetites of your souls after those valuable refreshments will then be excited: but, alas! they will be excited only to torment you. It is a most melancholy case which is represented in the parable, of a poor creature, who, after he had passed his life in the midst of the most overflowing plenty, was at length plunged into a state of indigence and misery, from which *he beheld Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom; and he cried, saying, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Laza-*

⁶ Isa. xxix.
8.

*rus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame*⁷. It seemed a very modest petition; he could hardly have asked a smaller favour than a drop of water; and there seemed something peculiarly mortifying, in receiving it from the finger of Lazarus; and yet you know, by the sequel of the story, that even this was denied him. This is the representation, which our Redeemer himself hath given us, of the condition of sinners in the eternal world: And will it not be a dreadful condition to you? Especially when aggravated by those rivers of living water which once surrounded you, and by this gracious proclamation, so often repeated, and so often despised: *If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*

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Luke xvi.
23, 24.

2. I would address myself to those, who are now thirsting for the blessings of the gospel.

I hope, through grace, there are some such amongst you; some, whose thirst is excited by what hath now been spoken, and are borrowing the words of David, in a sublimer sense than that in which they were originally intended: *O that one would give me to drink*

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⁸ 2 Sam.
xxiii. 15.

*of the water of the well of Bethlehem*⁸! Oh! that I might taste of those delightful streams, which flow from the Rock of Ages! To you, my friends, I would briefly say,—Consider the thirst you feel as a token for good,—and be importunate in your addresses to him, who is so able and willing to grant a supply.

You may consider the thirst which you feel as a token for good. The generality of mankind despise these blessings: And why do you desire them? Surely you may consider these desires as of a heavenly original. It is the voice of Christ that is now speaking; it is the Spirit of Christ that is now pleading with your heart; so that I may say to you, as was said to the blind man in the gospel, who was so earnestly begging a cure, *Be of good comfort, rise, he calleth thee*⁹.

⁹ Mark x.
49.

What can therefore remain, but that you should immediately apply yourselves to him. Go directly, and plead the case with him. Prostrate thyself, O humble penitent, prostrate thyself before his throne, and say, “Blessed Jesus, thou that knowest all things, knowest that I thirst after the blessings of thy gospel. Thou seest that I most ardently long for the pardon of sin, the favour of God,

the influences of thy Spirit, and the glories of thine heavenly kingdom. I am fully persuaded, that with regard to all these, thou art able to do for me abundantly above all I can ask or think. And wilt thou not relieve me? Wilt thou not *give me to drink*? Wherefore then are thine invitations published in the gospel? Wherefore didst thou proclaim those gracious words, which have been this day so frequently repeated in thine house? Why does thy Spirit even now work upon my heart, and raise there this fervency of desire? Wherefore didst thou weep? Wherefore didst thou bleed? Wherefore didst thou die, if thou hadst no compassion for perishing sinners? But thou hast compassion; thou hast already extended it, to thousands on earth, and millions in heaven. *Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief!* I throw myself at thy feet; nor can I fear I shall perish there, unless infinite power be weakened, and infinite love be exhausted." If but one soul return from the assembly with these sentiments, and these resolutions, all the labours of this day, and many former days, will be abundantly repaid; for that

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3. I would conclude with addressing myself to those who have already tasted these refreshments. With regard to such I would offer the following exhortations.

Be thankful for the refreshments you have already received. Bless God, that such merciful provision is made in the gospel, for the relief and comfort of necessitous creatures; and above all, be thankful, that you have been engaged to seek and to prize it, while so many are, as it were, dying for thirst, in the midst of these overflowing streams. It is said of Hagar, that when she was almost perishing in the wilderness, *the Lord opened*

¹ Gen. xxi. *her eyes, and she saw a fountain of water*¹.

^{19.} So it is in your case; the Lord hath *opened your eyes*, and therefore you have *seen this fountain*.

Be solicitous that others may taste those refreshments which have been imparted to you. It is said of Hagar, in the passage cited above, that when God had discovered this supply, she not only drank herself, but *gave to her child, and he also drank*. So

should you, my friends, be charitably concerned for the happiness of others as well as for your own. You that are parents should be concerned, that your children may drink; and you that are masters, that your servants may drink; and all, that your friends and neighbours may be refreshed. For, blessed be God, there is no danger of sinking this river by repeated plentiful draughts: still would it flow on, still would it overflow its borders, though not only we, but all the inhabitants of the earth, should not merely taste it, but live upon it. Which leads me to add,

Continue your application to Christ for farther supplies. We are told, that the miraculous stream which flowed from the rock attended the Israelites in their various removes. *They still drank of the rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ*^{2.} ² 1 Cor. x.
4.
Such are the waters that flow from the Rock of Ages; they do not only refresh the soul on its first conversion, but they afford it daily comfort and support. Be constant therefore in your applications to Christ, and diligent in the use of all appointed means for deriving influences from him.

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To conclude all, long after the heavenly world, where you shall receive a more abundant supply. The waters which followed Israel through the wilderness, failed when they came into an inhabited land: but this river of life will never forsake the believer; it will flow with him sweetly through the dark valley of the shadow of death, till it spreads itself into wider and deeper streams, in the lovely regions of the heavenly Canaan. Thus are we told, that in the *New Jerusalem* the *river of the water of life proceedeth from the throne of God, and of the Lamb*³. And thus our Lord assures the *woman of Samaria*, *whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but it shall be in him as a well of water springing up into everlasting life*. What then remains, but that we each of us cry out, as she did, Lord, *give us of this living water, that we may thirst no more, nor come, as now, to these ordinances*

³ Rev. xxii.
1. *to draw*⁴. Amen.

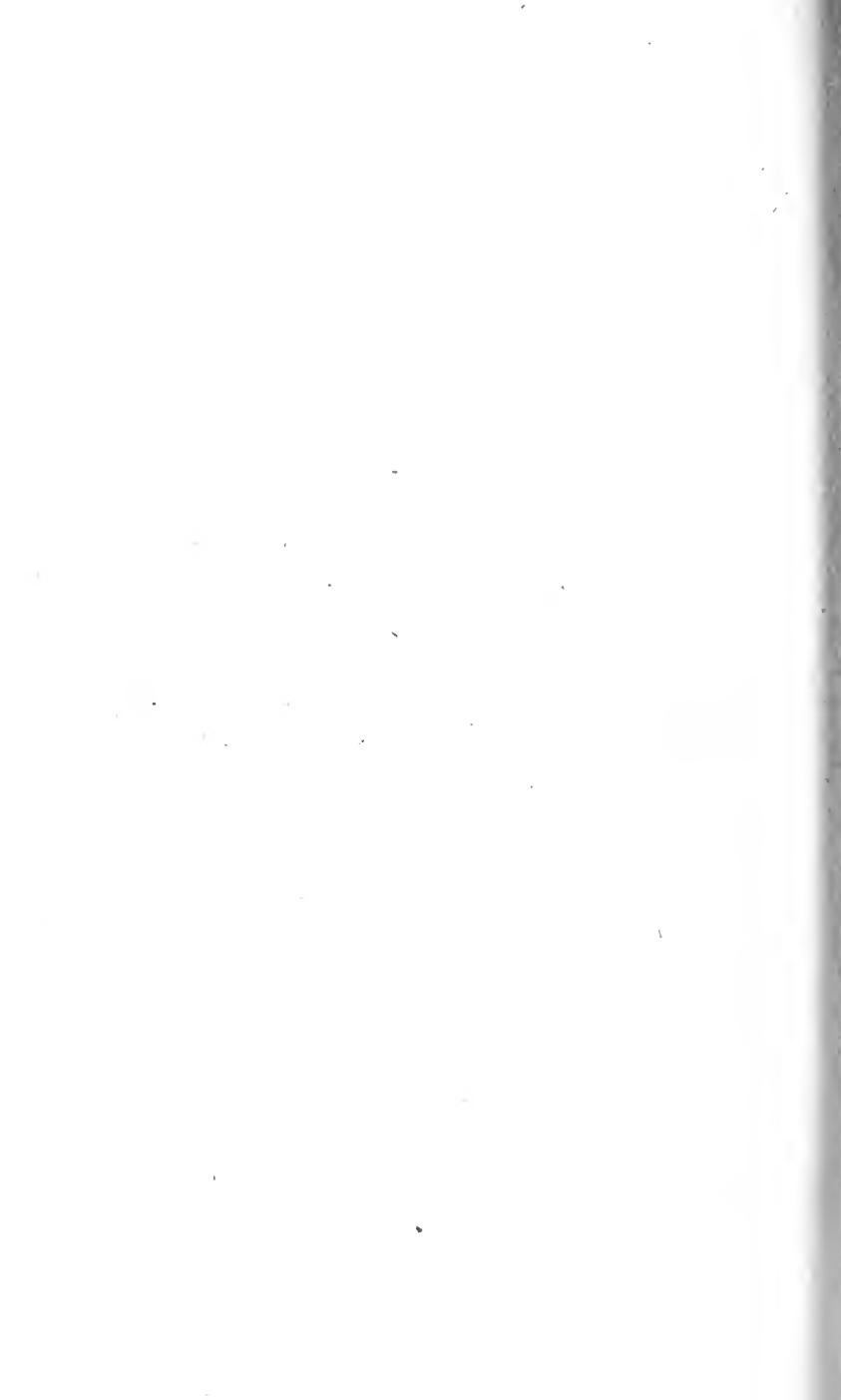
⁴ John iv.
14, 15.

THE CHRISTIAN WARRIOR ANIMATED
AND CROWNED :

A Funeral Sermon,

*Occasioned by the heroic Death of the Hon. Colonel JAMES GARDINER,
who was slain in the Battle at Preston-Pans, September 21, 1745.*

PREACHED AT NORTHAMPTON, OCTOBER 13.



DEDICATION.



TO THE

RIGHT HON. THE LADY FRANCES GARDINER.

MADAM,

THE intimate knowledge which I had of Colonel Gardiner's private as well as public character, and of that endeared friendship which so long subsisted between him and your Ladyship, makes me more sensible than most others can be, both of the inexpressible loss you have sustained, and of the exquisite sense you have of it. I might, in some degree, argue what you felt, from the agony with which my own heart was torn by that ever to be lamented stroke, which deprived the nation, and the church, of so great an ornament and blessing: and indeed, Madam, I was so sensible of your calamity, as to be ready in my first thoughts to congratulate

you, when I heard the report which at first prevailed, that you died under the shock. Yet cooler reflection teaches me, on many accounts, to rejoice that your Ladyship has survived that dearest part of yourself; though after having been so lovely and pleasant in your lives, it would have been matter of personal rejoicing, in death not to have been divided. The numerous and promising offspring with which God hath blessed your marriage, had evidently the highest interest in the continued life of so pious and affectionate a mother: and I hope, and assuredly believe, there was a more important, and to you a much dearer interest concerned, as God may be, and is, signally honoured, by the manner in which you bear this heaviest and most terrible stroke of his paternal rod.

God hath been pleased, Madam, to make you both eminent for a variety of graces; and he has proportionably distinguished you both, in the opportunity he has given you of exercising those, which suit the most painful scenes that can attend a pious and an honourable life. But when I consider, what it is to have lost such a man, at such a time, and in such circumstances, I must needs declare, that brave and heroic as the death of the Colonel was, your Ladyship's part is beyond all comparison the hardest. Yet

even here has the grace of Christ been sufficient for you; and I join with your Ladyship in adoring the power and faithfulness of him, who has here so remarkably shown, that he forgets not his promise to all his people of a strength proportionable to their day; that they may be enabled to glorify him in the hottest furnace, into which it is possible they should be cast.

To hear, as I have heard from several persons of distinguished character, who have lately had the happiness of being near your Ladyship, of that meek resignation to the Divine will, of that calm patience, of that Christian courage, with which, in so weak a state of health and spirits, you have supported under this awful providence, has given me great pleasure, but no surprise. So near a relation to so brave a man might have taught some degree of fortitude to a soul less susceptible of it than your Ladyship's. Nor is there any doubt, but that the prayers he has so long been laying up in store for you, especially since the decay of his constitution gave him reason to expect a speedy remove, will assuredly at such a season come into remembrance before God. And above all, the sublime principles of the Christian religion, so deeply imbibed into your own heart as well as his, will not fail to exert their energy on

such an occasion. These, Madam, will teach you to view the hand of a wise, a righteous, and a gracious God in this event; and will show you that a friendship founded on such a basis, so very endearing, and so closely cemented, as that which has been here for many years a blessing to you both, can know only a very short interruption, and will soon grow up into a union infinitely nobler and more delightful, which never shall be liable to any separation.

In the mean time, Madam, it may comfort us not a little under the sense of our present loss, to think what religious improvement we may gain by it, if we are not wanting to ourselves: and happy shall we be, indeed, if we so hear the rod, as to receive the instructions it so naturally suggests and enforces. Persons of any serious reflection will learn from this awful event, how little we can judge of the Divine favour by the visible dispensations of Providence here: they will learn, and it may be of great importance to consider it, just in such a crisis as this, that no distinguished degree of piety can secure the very best of men from the sword of a common enemy: and they will see, written, alas! in characters of the most precious blood that war ever spilt in our island, the vanity of the surest protectors and comforters

which mortality can afford, at a time when they are most needed.

These are general instructions, which, I hope, thousands will receive, on this universally lamented occasion: but to you, Madam, and to me, and to all that were honoured with the most intimate friendship of this Christian hero, his death has a peculiar voice. Whilst it leads us back into so many past scenes of delight, in the remembrance of which we now pour out our souls within us, it calls aloud, amidst all this tender distress, for a tribute of humble thankfulness to God, that ever we enjoyed such a friend, and especially in such an intimacy of mutual affection; and that we had an opportunity of observing, in so many instances, the secret recesses of a heart, which God had enriched, adorned, and ennobled with so much of his own image, and such abundant communications of his grace: it calls for our redoubled diligence and resolution, in imitating that bright assemblage of virtues, which shone so resplendent in our illustrious friend: and surely it must, by a kind of irresistible influence, mortify our affections to this impoverished world; and must cause nature to concur with grace, in raising our hearts upwards to that glorious abode, where he dwells triumphant and immor-

tal, and waits our arrival with an ardour of pure and elevated love, which it was impossible for death to quench.

Next to these views, nothing can give your Ladyship greater satisfaction than to reflect, how happy you made the amiable consort you have lost, in that intimate relation you so long bore to each other; in which, I well know, that growing years ripened and increased your mutual esteem and friendship. Nor will your generous heart be insensible of that pleasure, which may arise from reflecting, that the manner of his death, though in itself so terrible, that we dare not trust imagination with the particular review, was to him, in those circumstances, most glorious; to religion highly ornamental; and to his country, great as his loss is, on various accounts beneficial. Far, very far, be it from us to think, that Colonel Gardiner, though fallen by the weapons of rebellion and treason, has fought and died in vain. I trust in God, that so heroic a behaviour will inspire our warriors with augmented courage, now they are called to exert it in a cause, the most noble and important that can ever be in question, the cause of our laws, our liberty, and religion. I trust, that all who keep up a correspondence with heaven by prayer, will renew their intercession

for this bleeding land with increasing fervour, now we have lost one who stood in the breach with such unwearied importunity. And I am well assured, that of the multitudes who lay up his memory in their inmost hearts with veneration and love, not a few will be often joining their most affectionate prayers to God, for your Ladyship, and the dear rising branches of your family, with those which you may, in consequence of a thousand obligations, always expect from,

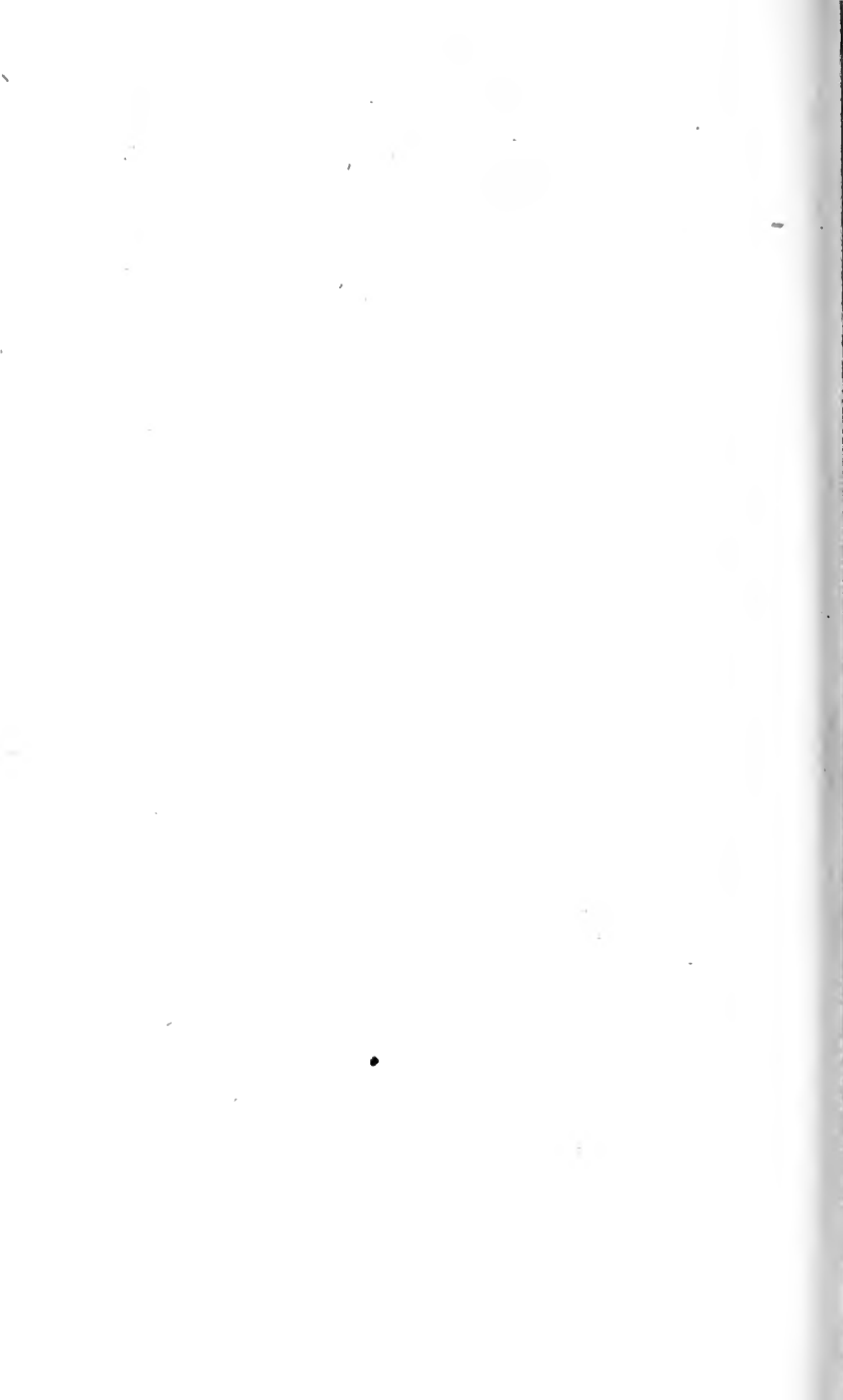
Madam,

Your Ladyship's most faithful,

And obedient humble servant,

P. DODDRIDGE.

Northampton,
November 27, 1745.



SERMON X.

THE CHRISTIAN WARRIOR ANIMATED
AND CROWNED.

REVELATION, ii. 10.

*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of
life.*

IT is a glory peculiar to the Christian religion, that it is capable of yielding joy and triumph to the mind, amidst calamities, in which the strength of nature, and of a philosophy that has no higher a support, can hardly give it serenity, or even patience. Those boasted aids are but like a candle in some tempestuous night, which, how artificially soever it may be fenced in, is often extinguished amidst the storm, in which it should guide and cheer the traveller, or the mariner; whom it leaves on a sudden, in darkness, horror, and fear: while the consolation of the gospel, like the sun, makes a sure day even when behind the thickest

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X.

SERM.

X.

cloud, and soon emerges from it with an accession of more sensible lustre.

The observation is verified in these words, considered in connexion with that awful providence, which has this day determined my thoughts to fix upon them, as the subject of my discourse; the fall of that truly great and good man, Colonel Gardiner: the endearing tenderness of whose friendship would have rendered his death an unspeakable calamity to me, had his character been only of the common standard; as on the other hand, the exalted excellency of his character makes his death to be lamented by thousands, who were not happy in any peculiar intimacy or personal acquaintance with him.

While we mourn the brave warrior, the exemplary Christian, and the affectionate friend; lost to ourselves and our country, to the church and the world, at a time when we most needed all the defence of his bravery, all the edification of his example, all the comfort of his converse: struck with the various and aggravated sorrow of so sudden, and so terrible a blow, methinks there is but one voice that can cheer us, which is this of the great *Captain of our salvation*, so lately

addressing him, and still addressing us, in these comprehensive and animated words, SERM.
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Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

With regard to the connexion of them, it may be sufficient to observe, that our Lord in all these seven epistles to the Asiatic churches represents the Christian life as a warfare, and the blessings of the future state as rewards to be bestowed on conquerors. *To him that overcometh will I give such and such royal donatives.* Pursuing the same allegory, he warns the church of Smyrna of an approaching combat, which should be attended with some severe circumstances. Some of them were to become captives; *the devil shall cast some of you into prison:* and though the power of the enemy was to be limited, in its extent, as well as its duration, to the *tribulation of ten days*, it seems to be implied, that while many were harassed and distressed during that time, some of them should before the close of it be called to resist unto blood. But their great Leader furnishes them with suitable armour, and proportionable courage, by this gracious as-

SERM. X. surance, which it is our present business farther to contemplate: *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

In which words you naturally observe a charge,—and a promise by which it is enforced.—I shall briefly illustrate each, and then conclude with some reflections upon the whole.

First, I am to open the charge here given: *Be thou faithful unto death.*

Concerning which I would observe, that though it is immediately addressed to the church at Smyrna, yet the nature of the thing and numberless passages of the Divine word concur to prove, that it is common in its obligation to all Christians, and indeed to all men.

I shall not be large in explaining the nature of faithfulness in general; concerning which I might show you, that the word here rendered faithful, has sometimes a relation to the testimony which God has given us, and sometimes to some trust that he has reposed in us. In the former sense, it is

properly rendered believing, and opposed to infidelity: *Be not faithless, but believing*¹. In the latter, it is opposed to injustice: *He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much*; whereas *he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much*². And it is in reference to this sense of it, that our Lord represents himself as saying to the man who had improved his talents aright, *Well done, good and faithful servant*³! Our deceased friend was so remarkably faithful in both these senses; so ready to admit, and so zealous to defend the *faith once delivered to the saints*; and so active in improving those various talents, with which, in mercy to many others as well as to himself, God had intrusted him; that it was very natural to touch upon these significations of the word, though it has here a more particular view to another virtue, for which he was so illustriously conspicuous, I mean the courageous fidelity of a soldier in his warfare.

In this sense of the word, it is opposed to treachery or cowardice, desertion or disobedience to military orders. And thus it is used elsewhere in this same book of the Revelation, when speaking of those who war

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¹ John xx.
27.² Luke xvi.
10.³ Mat. xxv.
23.

SERM. X. under the banner of *the Lamb, the King of kings, and Lord of lords*, the inspired writer tells us *they are called, and chosen, and faithful*⁴, a select body of brave and valiant soldiers.

⁴Rev. xvii.
14.

This hint will also fix the easiest and plainest sense in which the persons, to whom the text is addressed, are required to be faithful *unto death*: which, though it does indeed in general imply a *patient continuance in well doing*⁵, in whatever scenes of life Divine providence may place us; yet does especially refer to martial bravery, and express a readiness to face death in its most terrible forms, when our great General shall lead us on to it. You well know this to be an indispensable condition of our being acknowledged by him in the day of his final triumph: and of this he warned those that gathered around him, when he was first raising his army, under the greatest disadvantages in outward appearance; expressly and plainly telling them, that they must be content to follow him to martyrdom, to follow him to crucifixion, when they receive the word of command to do it; or that all their profession of regard to him would be in

⁵Rom. ii.
7.

vain. *If any man, says he, will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*⁶: for *he that loveth his own life more than me, is not worthy of me*⁷; he does not deserve the honour of bearing my name, and passing for one of my soldiers: indeed he *cannot*, on any terms, *be my disciple*⁸.

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⁶ Mark
viii. 34.

⁷ Matt. x.
37. 39.

⁸ Luke xiv.
26.

This therefore is in effect the language of our Lord, when he says, *be thou faithful unto death*: it is as if he had said, “Remember all you of Smyrna, or of any other place and country, that call yourselves Christians, throughout all generations, that you were by baptism enlisted under my banners: remember that you have, as it were, sealed, and subscribed your engagement to me, by every sacrament you have since attended;” as indeed it is well known, the word sacrament originally signifies a military oath, which soldiers take as a pledge of fidelity to their general: “Remember therefore, that you are ever to continue with me, and to march forward under my direction, whatever hardships and fatigues may lie in the way. And remember, that if I lead you on to the most formidable combat, you must cheerfully obey the word of command, and charge boldly,

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though you should immediately die, whether by the sword, or by fire. Should you dare to flee, I am myself your enemy; and the weapons which I bear would justly be levelled at your own traitorous heads. But if you bravely follow me, I know how to make you ample amends, even in circumstances when no human power and gratitude can reach you; for it is my glorious prerogative to engage, that to those who are thus *faithful unto death, I will give a crown of life.*" We are therefore,

Secondly, To consider the promise, by which the charge is enforced: *I will give thee a crown of life.*

And here I might observe,—*a crown of life* is the glorious reward proposed,—and it is to be received *from the hand of Christ.*

1. *A crown of life* is the reward proposed: which we are sure in this connexion implies both grandeur and felicity; here, though rarely, connected together.

There is, no doubt, an allusion in these words to the ancient, and I think very prudent, custom of animating the bravery of soldiers by honorary rewards, and particu-

larly by crowns; sometimes of laurel, and sometimes, in some extraordinary instances, of silver or gold; which they were permitted to wear on public occasions, and in consequence of receiving which they were sometimes entitled to some peculiar immunities. But here our Lord Jesus Christ, conscious of his own Divine power and prerogative, speaks with a dignity and elevation, which no earthly prince or commander could ever assume; promising *a crown of life*, and that, as was observed before, even to those who should fall in the battle: *a crown of life* in the highest sense; not only one, which should ever be fresh and fair, but which should give immortality to the happy brow it adorned; and be for ever worn, not only as the monument of bravery and victory, but as the ensign of royalty too: *a crown* connected with *a kingdom*, and with what no other kingdom can give, perpetual life to enjoy it; perpetual youth and vigour to relish all its delights. And this is agreeable to the language of other scriptures, where we read of the *crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him*⁹; *a crown of*¹⁰ *righteousness, which the Lord the righteous*

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12.

SERM. *Judge shall give*¹; *a crown of glory, which*
 X. *fadeth not away*². We may also observe,

2 Tim. iv. 8. 2. That it is said to be *given by Christ*.

1 Pet. v. 4. This some pious commentators have explained, as intimating, that it is the gift of the Redeemer's free and unmerited grace, and not a retribution due to the merit of him that receiveth it. And this is an undoubted truth, which it is of the highest importance to acknowledge and consider.

The proper *wages of sin is death*; but *eternal life is*, in opposition to wages, *the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord*³. We should

Rom. vi. 23. humbly own it every day, that there is no proportion between the value of our services, and the *crown* which we expect to receive: should own, that it is mercy that pardons our sins, and grace that accepts our services; much more that crowns them. Grace, grace, shall, as it were, be engraven upon that *crown*, in characters large and indelible: nor will that inscription diminish its lustre, or impair the pleasure with which we shall receive it. I could not forbear mentioning this thought, as a truth of the utmost importance, which stands on the firmest basis of very many express scriptures; a truth, of

which perhaps no man living had ever a deeper sense than our deceased friend. But I mention it thus obliquely, because it may be doubted whether we can justly argue it from hence; since the word *give* is sometimes used for rendering a retribution justly due, and that in instances where grace and favour have, in propriety of speech, no concern at all*.

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X.

But it is certain, that this expression, *I will give thee a crown of life*, is intended to lead our thoughts to this important circumstance; that this *crown* is to be *received from the hand of Christ* himself. And the apostle Paul evidently refers to the same circumstance, in terms which show how much he entered into the spirit of the thought, when he says, *The Lord the righteous Judge shall give it me*⁴: he himself, the great Judge of the contest, whose eye witnesses the whole course of it, whose decision cannot err, and from whose sentence there is no appeal: alluding to the judge who presided in the Grecian games, who was always a person of

⁴ 2 Tim. iv. 8.

* Compare Matt. xx. 8, *Give the labourers their hire*, with Col. iv. 1, *Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal*.

SERM. rank and eminence, and himself reached
 X. forth the reward to him who overcame in
 them.

So that on the whole, when our Lord Jesus Christ says, *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*; methinks our devout meditations may expatiate upon the words, in some such paraphrase as this. It is as if he had said to you, and to me, and to all his people, "O my faithful soldiers, fear not death in its most terrible array; for you are immortal. *Fear not them that can kill the body*⁵: you have a nobler part, which they cannot reach; and I will undertake, not only for its rescue, but its happiness. I will answer for it, on the honour of my royal word, that it shall live in a state of noble enlargement, of triumphant joy. Think on me: *I am he that liveth, though I was dead: and behold, I am alive for evermore*⁶: and *because I live, you shall live also*⁷; shall exist in a state that deserves the great and honourable name of life; so that earth in all its lustre and pleasure, when compared with it, is but as a scene of death, or at best as an amusing dream when one awaketh⁸."

Matt. x.
23.

Rev. i.
13.
John xiv.
19.

Ps. lxxiii.
20.

We may also consider him, as pursuing

this animating address, and saying, “ My SERM.
X.
brave companions in tribulation and patience, you shall not only live, but reign. Think not, thou good soldier, who art now fighting under my banner, that thy General will wear his honours alone. If I have my crown, if I have my triumph, be assured that thou also shalt have thine. Thou mayest indeed seem to perish in the combat; and thy friends may mourn, and thine enemies insult, as if thou wert utterly cut off. But behold, true victory spreads over thee her golden wing, and holds out, not a garland of fading flowers or leaves, but a crown that shall keep its lustre, when all the costliest gems on earth are melted in the general burning; yea, when the luminaries of heaven are extinguished, and the sun and stars fade away in their orbs.”

“ Nor will I,” does he seem to say, “ send thee this crown by some inferior hand; not even by the noblest angel, that waits on the throne I have now ascended. Thou shalt *receive it from mine own hand* ;” from that hand, which would make the least gift valuable: what a dignity then will it add to the

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X.

greatest! “Nor will I myself confer this reward in private; it shall be given with the most magnificent solemnity. Thou shalt be brought to me before the assembled world. Thy name shall be called over; thou shalt appear, and I will own thee, and crown thee, in public view. Thy friends shall see it with raptures of joy, and congratulate an honour in which they shall also share. Thine enemies shall see it with envy and with rage, to increase their confusion and misery: they shall see, that while by their malicious assaults they were endeavouring to destroy thee, they were only establishing thy throne, and brightening the lustre which shall for ever adorn thy brow; while theirs is blasted with the thunder of resistless wrath, and deep engraven with the indelible marks of vengeance. This *crown* shalt thou for ever wear, as the perpetual token of my esteem and affection: nor shall it be merely a shining ornament: a rich revenue, a glorious authority, goes along with it. *Thou shalt reign for ever and ever*⁹; and be a *king*, as well as a *priest unto God*¹.”

Rev. xxii.
⁵
Rev. i. 6.

They who enter by a lively faith into the

import of these glorious words will, I doubt not, pardon my having expatiated so largely upon them. *We have believed, and therefore have we spoken*²: and I question not, but ² 2 Cor. iv. 13. SERM.
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(1.) What reason have we to adore the grace of our blessed Redeemer, which prepares, and bestows, such rewards as these!

While we hear him saying, *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*; methinks it is but natural for each of our hearts to answer: "Lord, dost thou speak of giving a *crown*, a crown of life and glory, to me! Too great, too great, might the favour seem, if I, who have so often lifted up my rebellious hand against thy throne, might be allowed to lay down this guilty head in the dust, and lose the memory of my treasons, and the sense of my punishment together, in everlasting forgetfulness. And is such a *crown* prepared, and wilt thou, my injured Sovereign, who mightest so justly

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arm thyself with vengeance against me, bestow this crown with thine own hand; with all these other circumstances of dignity, so as even to make my triumphs thine own!—What is my strictest fidelity to thee? Though I do indeed, as I humbly desire that I may, continue *faithful unto death*, I am yet but an *unprofitable servant*; I have done no more than *my duty*³. I have pursued thy work, in thy strength; and, in consequence of that love which thou hast put into my heart, it hath been its own reward: and dost thou thus crown one favour with another?—Blessed Jesus, I would with all humility *lay that crown at thy feet*, acknowledging before thee, and the whole world, as I shall at length do in a more expressive form, that it is not only the gift of thy love, but the *purchase of thy blood*. Never, never had I beheld it, otherwise than at an unapproachable distance, as an aggravation of my misery and despair, hadst not thou worn another *crown*, a crown of infamy and of thorns. The gems which must for ever adorn my temples, were formed from those precious drops that once trickled down thine; and all the splendour of my *robes* of

³ Luke
xvii. 10.

triumph is owing to their being *washed in the blood of the Lamb*⁴." With what pleasing wonder may we pursue the thought! And while it employs our mind,

SERM.
X.
4 Rev. vii.
14.

(2.) How justly may this awaken a generous ambition to secure this *crown* to ourselves!

Dearly as it was purchased by our blessed Redeemer, it is most *freely offered* to us, to the youngest, to the meanest, to the most unworthy. It is not prepared, merely for those that have worn an earthly diadem or coronet: would to God it were not despised by most of them, as a thing less worthy of their thoughts, than the most trifling amusement, by which they unbend their minds from the weighty cares attending their station! But it is prepared for you; even for every one, who thinks it worth pursuing, and accepting, upon the terms of the gospel covenant; for every one, who believing in Christ, and loving him, is humbly determined through his grace to be *faithful unto death*.— And shall this glorious proposal be made to you in vain? Were it an earthly crown that could lawfully be obtained, are there not

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many of us, notwithstanding all its weight of anxieties, and all the piercing thorns with which we might know it to be lined, that would be ready eagerly to seize it, and perhaps to contend and quarrel with each other for it? But here is no foundation for contention. Here is a *crown* for each; and such a *crown*, that all the royal ornaments of all the princes upon earth, when compared with it, are lighter than a feather, and viler than dust. And shall we neglect it? Shall we refuse it, from such a hand too, as that by which it is offered? Shall we so *judge ourselves unworthy of eternal life*⁵, as thereby indeed to make ourselves worthy of eternal death? For there is no other alternative.— But blessed be God, it is not universally neglected. There are, I doubt not, among you, many who pursue it, many who shall assuredly obtain it. For their sakes let us reflect,

(3.) How courageously may the *heads* which are to wear such a crown, *be lifted up* to face all the trials of life and death!

Those trials may be various, and perhaps extreme; but if borne aright, far from depriving us of this *crown*, they will only serve

⁵ Acts xiii.
46.

to increase its lustre. It is the apostle Paul's SERM.
X. express assertion; and he speaks as transported with the thought: *For this cause we faint not, but though the outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day: for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal*⁶. Surely with this support, we may not only live, but triumph, in poverty, in reproach, in weakness, in pain: and with this we may die, not only serenely, but joyfully. O, my friends, where are our hearts? Where is our faith? Nay, I will add, where is our reason? Why are not our eyes, our desires, and our hopes, more frequently directed upward? Surely one ray from that resplendent diadem might be sufficient to confound all the false charms of these transitory vanities, which indeed owe all their lustre to the darkness in which they are placed. Surely when our *spirits are overwhelmed within us*, one glance of it might be

⁶ 2 Cor. iv.
16—18.

SERM. X. sufficient to animate and elevate them ; and might teach us to say, in the midst of dangers, sorrows, and death, *In all these things we are more than conquerors, through him*

^{7 Rom.viii.} ^{37.} *that loved us*⁷. Thus have some triumphed in the last extremities of nature ; and both the subject, and the occasion also, loudly calls us to reflect,

(4.) What reason we have to congratulate these happy souls, that have already received the *crown of life* !

When we are weeping over the cold, yea, the bleeding remains of such, surely it is for ourselves, and not for them, that the stream flows. The thought of their condition, far from moving our compassion, may rather inspire us with joy and with praise. Look not on their pale countenance, nor on the wide and deep wounds, through which perhaps the soul rushed out to seize the great prize of its faith and hope ; though even those wounds appear beautiful, when earned by distinguished virtue, by piety to their country and their God. Look not on the eyes closed in death, or the once honoured and beloved head, now covered with the

dust of the grave: but view, by an internal believing eye, that different form which the exalted triumphant spirit already wears, the earnest of a yet brighter glory. Their great Leader, whose care of them we are fondly ready to suspect, or secretly to complain of as deficient in such circumstances as these, points, as it were, to the *white robes*, and the *flourishing palms*, which he has given them; and calls for our regard to the *crowns of life* which he has set on their heads, and to the *songs of joy and praise* to which he has formed their exulting tongues. And do we sully and dishonour their triumphs with our tears? Do we think so meanly of heaven, and of them, as to wish them with us again: that they might eat and drink at our tables; that they might talk with us in our low language; that they might travel with us from stage to stage in this wilderness; and take their share with us in those vanities of life, of which we ourselves are so often weary, that there is hardly a week, or a day, in which we are not lifting up our eyes, and saying with a deep inward groan, *O that we had wings like a dove! Then would we flee away, and be at rest*^s.

^s Psal. lv.
6.

SERM.

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Surely with relation to these faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ, who have already fallen, it is a matter of no small joy to reflect, that their *warfare is accomplished*⁹; that they have at length passed through every scene in which their fidelity could be endangered; so that now they are inviolably secure. How much more then should we rejoice, that they are *entered*, not only into the rest, but *into the joy of their Lord*; that they conquered, even when they fell, and are now reaping the fruits, the celestial and immortal fruits, of that last great victory?

A sense of honour often taught the heathens, when attending those friends to the funeral pile, who had died honourably in their country's cause, to use some ceremonies expressive of their joy for their glory; though that glory was an empty name, and all the reward of it a wreath of laurel, which was soon to crackle in the flame, and vanish into smoke. And shall not the joy and glory of the living spirit affect us, much more than they could be affected with the honours paid to the mangled corpse?

Let us then think with reverence, and with joy, on the pious dead; and especially on

⁹ Isa. xl.
2.

those whom God honoured with any special opportunities of approving their fidelity, in life, or in death: and if we mourn, as who, in some circumstances, can forbear it? let it be as Christians, with that mixture of high congratulation, with that erect countenance, and that undaunted heart, which become those that see by faith their exaltation and felicity; and burning with a strong and sacred eagerness to join their triumphant company, let us be ready to share in the most painful of their trials, that we may also share in their glories.

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And surely, if I have ever known a life, and a death; capable of inspiring us with these sentiments in their sublimest elevations, it was the life and the death of that illustrious Christian hero, Colonel Gardiner; whose character was too well known to many of you, by some months residence here, to need your being informed of it from me; and whose history was too remarkable to be confined within those few remaining moments, which must be allotted to the finishing of this discourse. Yet there was something so uncommon in both, that I think it

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of high importance to the honour of the gospel and grace of Christ, that they should be delivered down to posterity, in a distinct and particular view. And therefore, as the providence of God, in concurrence with that most intimate and familiar friendship with which this great and good man was pleased to honour me, gives me an opportunity of speaking of many important things, especially relating to his religious experiences, with greater exactness and certainty than most others might be capable of doing; and as he gave me his full permission, in case I should have the affliction to survive him, to declare freely whatever I knew of him, which I might apprehend conducive to the glory of God, and the advancement of religion; I purpose publishing, in a distinct tract, some remarkable passages of his life, illustrated by extracts from his own letters, which speak in the most forcible manner the genuine sentiments of his heart. But as I promise myself considerable assistance in this work from some valuable persons in the northern part of our island, and possibly from some of his own papers, to which our present confusions

forbid my access, I must delay the execution of this design at least for a few months; and must likewise take heed, that I do not too much anticipate what I may then offer to the public view, by what it might otherwise be very proper to mention now.

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Let it therefore suffice for the present to remind you, that Colonel Gardiner was one of the most illustrious instances of the energy, and indeed I must also add, of the sovereignty of Divine grace, which I have heard or read of in modern history. He was in the most amazing and miraculous manner, without any Divine ordinance, without any religious opportunity, or peculiar advantage, deliverance, or affliction, reclaimed on a sudden, in the vigour of life and health, from the most licentious and abandoned sensuality, not only to a steady course of regularity and virtue, but to high devotion, and strict, though unaffected sanctity of manners: a course, in which he persisted for more than twenty-six years, that is, to the close of life, so remarkably eminent for piety towards God, diffusive humanity and Christian charity, lively faith, deep humility, strict

SERM. X. temperance, active diligence in improving time, meek resignation to the will of God, steady patience in enduring afflictions, unaffected contempt of secular interest, and resolute and courageous zeal in maintaining truth, as well as in reprov^{ing}, and, where his authority might take place, restraining vice and wickedness of every kind; that I must deliberately declare, that when I consider all these particulars together, it is hard for me to say where, but in the book of God, he found his example, or where he has left his equal. Every one of these articles, with many more, I hope, if God spare my life, to have an opportunity of illustrating, in such a manner as to show, that he was a living demonstration of the energy and excellency of the Christian religion; nor can I imagine how I can serve its interests better than by recording what I have seen and known upon this head, known to my edification, as well as my joy.

But oh, how shall I lead back your thoughts, and my own, to what we once enjoyed in him, without too deep and tender a sense of what we have lost! To have *poured*

out his soul in blood; to have fallen by the savage and rebellious hands of his own countrymen, at the wall of his own house; deserted by those, who were under the highest obligations that can be imagined to have defended his life with their own; and, above all, to have seen with his dying eyes the enemies of our religion and liberties triumphant, and to have heard in his latest moments the horrid noise of their insulting shouts;—is a scene, in the view of which we are almost tempted to say, Where were the shields of angels? Where the eye of Providence? Where the remembrance of those numberless prayers which had been offered to God for the preservation of such a man, at such a time as this?—But let faith assure us, that he was never more dear and precious in the eye of his Divine Leader than in these dreadful moments, when if sense were to judge, he might seem most neglected.

That is of all others the happiest death, which may most sensibly approve our fidelity to God, and our zeal for his glory. To stand singly in the combat with the fiercest enemies, in the best of causes, when the whole

SERM. X. regiment he commanded, fled; to throw himself with so noble an ardour to defend those on foot, whom the whole body which he headed were appointed to support, when he saw that the fall of the nearest commander exposed those brave men to the extremity of danger, were circumstances that evidently showed how much he held honour and duty dearer than life. He could not but be conscious of the distinguished profession he had made, under a religious character; he could not but be sensible how much our army, in circumstances like these, needs all that the most generous examples can do, to animate its officers and its soldiers: and therefore, although when his men would hear no voice but that of their fears he might have retreated without infamy, he seems deliberately and rightly to have judged, that it was better he should sacrifice in such a cause the little remainder of his life than attempt to preserve it by a conduct, which might leave the least room even for envy and prejudice to suggest, that the regard to religion and the public, which he had so remarkably professed on all occasions, was

not strong enough to lead him to face danger and death, which natural bravery itself had in early youth taught him to despise. He had long since felt the genuine force of honour sanctified by piety; and consequently, had too just a zeal for his king and country, to bear the thought of deserting the trust committed to him in such an important moment; too warm a love for the protestant religion, not to rejoice in a call of Providence to bleed in its defence. And therefore, that he might make the last and utmost opposition in his power to a rebellious crew, by whose success, should it go on, an inlet would be opened to the cruel ravages of arbitrary power, and to the bloody and relentless rage of popish superstition, he *loved not his life unto the death*¹. And in this view his death was martyrdom, and has, I doubt not, received the applauses and rewards of it: for what is martyrdom, but voluntarily to meet death for the honour of God, and the testimony of a good conscience?

And if it be indeed true, as it is reported on very considerable authority, that before he expired he had an interview with the

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1 Rev. xii.

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leader of the opposite party, and declared in his presence “the full assurance he had of an immortal crown, which he was going to receive,” it is a circumstance worthy of being had in everlasting remembrance: as in that case Providence may seem wonderfully to have united two seemingly inconsistent circumstances, in the manner of his dying; the alternative of either of which he has spoken of in my hearing, as what with humble submission to the great Lord of life he could most earnestly wish: “that if he were not called directly to die for the truth,” which he rightly judged the most glorious and happy lot of mortality, “he might either fall in the field of battle, fighting in defence of the religion and liberties of his country; or might have an opportunity of expressing his hopes and joys, as a Christian, to the honour of his Lord, and the edification of those about him, in his departing moments; and so might go off this earthly stage,” as in the letter that relates his death, it is expressly said that he did, “triumphing in the assurance of a blessed immortality.”

How difficult it must be, in our present

circumstances, to gain certain and exact information, you will easily perceive: but enough is known, and more than enough, to show how justly the high consolations of that glorious subject, which we have been contemplating, may be applied to the present solemn occasion. From what is certain with relation to him, we may presume to say, that after he had adorned the gospel by so honourable a life, in such a conspicuous station, God seems to have condescended, as with his own hand, to raise him an illustrious theatre, on which he might die a venerable and amiable *spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men*²; balancing to his native land, by such an exit, the loss of what future services it could have expected, from a constitution so much broken as his was, by the fatigues of his campaign in Flanders, where by his indefatigable services in a very extreme season he contracted an illness, from which he never recovered.

On the whole therefore, whatever cause we have, as indeed we have great cause to sympathize with his wounded family, and with his wounded country; and how decent so-

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² 1 Cor. iv.
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SERM. X. ever it may be, like David, to take up our lamentation over *the mighty fallen, and the* ³ *brightest weapons of our war perished*³; and oh, how naturally might some of us adopt the preceding words too! Yet after all, let us endeavour to summon up a spirit, like that with which he bore the loss of friends, eminent for their goodness and usefulness.

² *Gal. i.* And while *we glorify God in him*⁴, as on so many accounts we have reason to do, let us be animated by such an example to a resolution of continuing, like him, *steadfast* in our duty, amidst desertion and danger, and all the terrors that can beset us around. As he, having been so eminently *faithful unto death*, has undoubtedly *received a crown of life*, which shines with distinguished lustre, among ⁵ *those who are come out of much tribulation*⁵; let us be courageous *followers of him*, and of all the glorious company of those, *who through* ⁶ *faith and patience inherit the promises*⁶. Then may we be able to enter into the comfort and spirit of them all, and of this promise in particular; and shall not be discouraged, though we are called to *endure a great fight of afflictions*⁷, or even to sacrifice our lives, in de-

⁷ *Heb. x.*
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fence of our religion and liberties: since in this cause we know, if we should fall like him, even *to die is gain*⁸. We are assured upon the best authority, that as he *fought the good fight* with so heroic a fortitude, and *finished his course* with so steady a tenor, and *kept the faith* with so unshaken a resolution, *there is laid up for him a crown of brighter glory* than he has yet received, *which the Lord the righteous Judge will give* unto him *in that great expected day*: and we know, that it shall be given, *not unto him only*, nor only to those who have had an opportunity of distinguishing themselves by the most heroic services or sufferings in the cause of their Divine Leader, *but unto all them that love his appearance*⁹. Amen.

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X.⁸ Phil. i.
21.⁹ 2 Tim. iv.
7, 8.

THE END.

An Epitaph

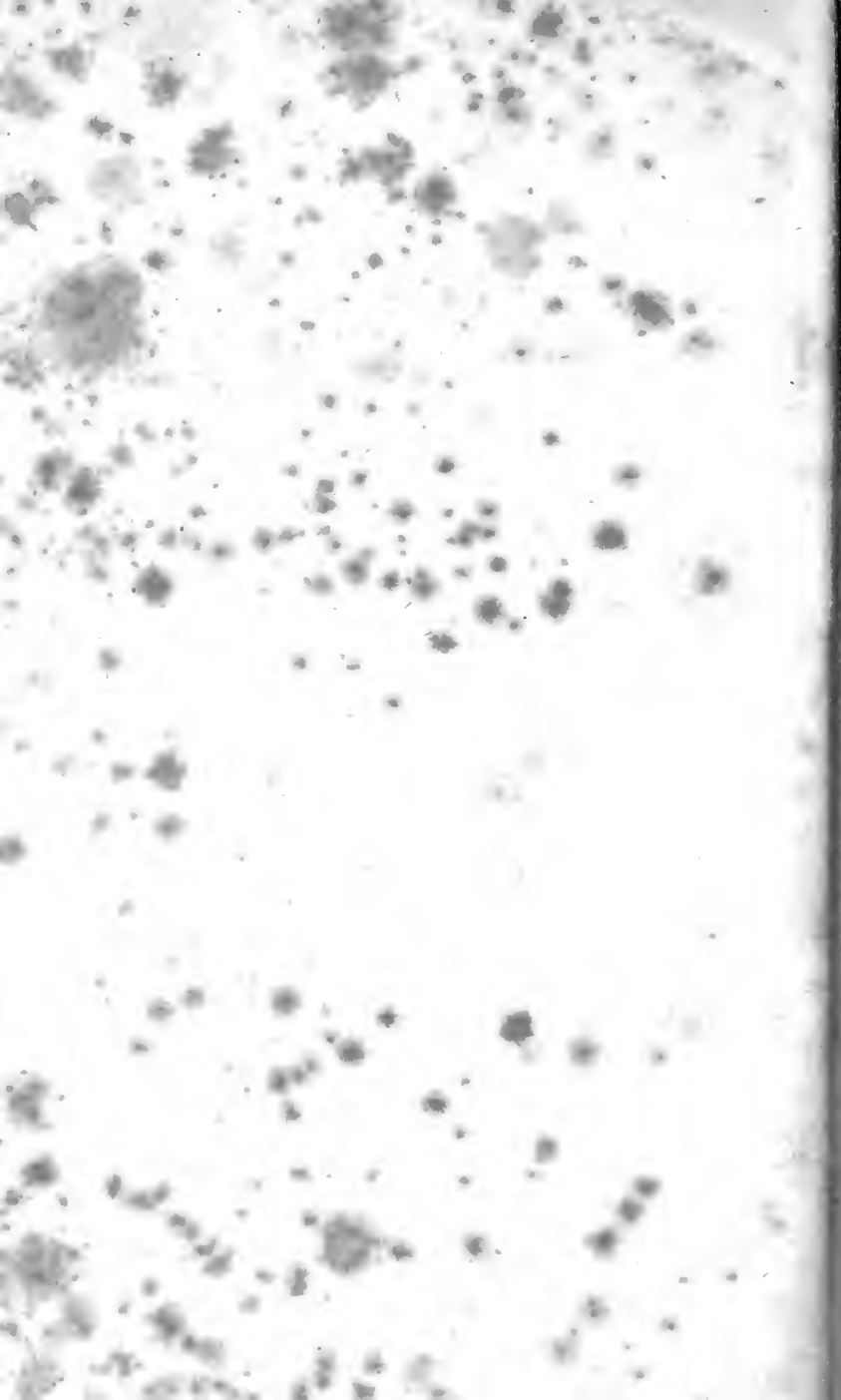
ON PHILIP DODDRIDGE, D. D.

BY MR. BENJAMIN SOWDEN, OF ROTTERDAM.

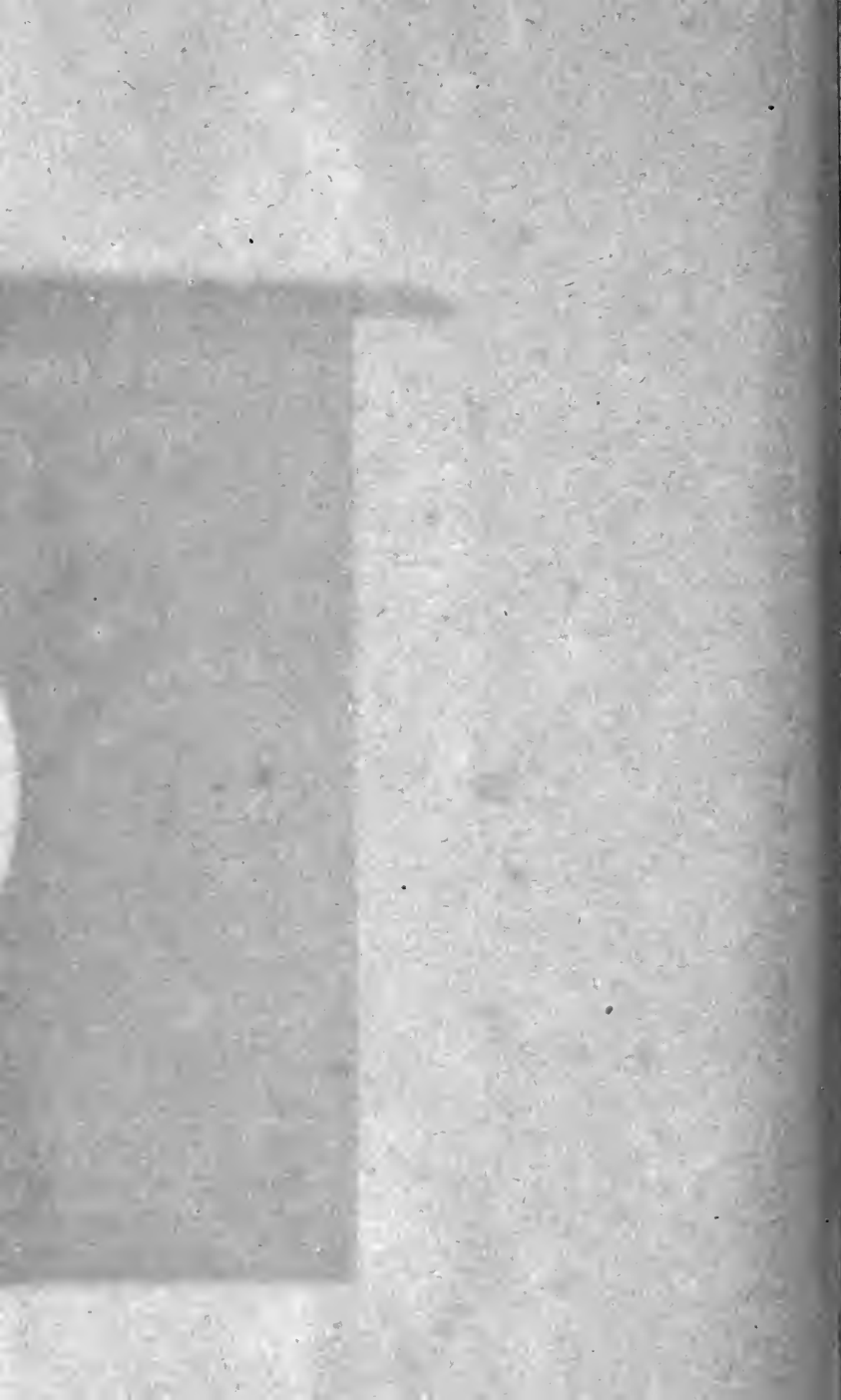
SUBLIME of genius! and with science bless'd,
Of every brilliant excellence possess'd;
Beyond the common standard learn'd and wise,
Of conduct artless, and above disguise:
In whom but equals few, superiors none,
The friend, the husband, and the father shone!
Loved by the truly virtuous and the great,
And honour'd with the flaming bigot's hate:
A tutor form'd t' implant in yielding youth,
And into fruit mature the seeds of truth;
A writer, elegant in manly charms,
Who, like the sun, enlightens while he warms;
A pastor, blending with divinest skill,
A seraph's knowledge, with a seraph's zeal,
Not only taught religion's paths, but trod,
And like illustrious Enoch, walk'd with God.
DODDRIDGE! these rich embellishments combined,
Were thine—but who can paint an angel's mind?
Heaven saw thee ripe for glory, and in love
Removed thee hence to grace the realms above!

FEB. 21, 1754.









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Doddrige, Philip

Sermons on various subjects. Vol.4.

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