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S E R M O N S

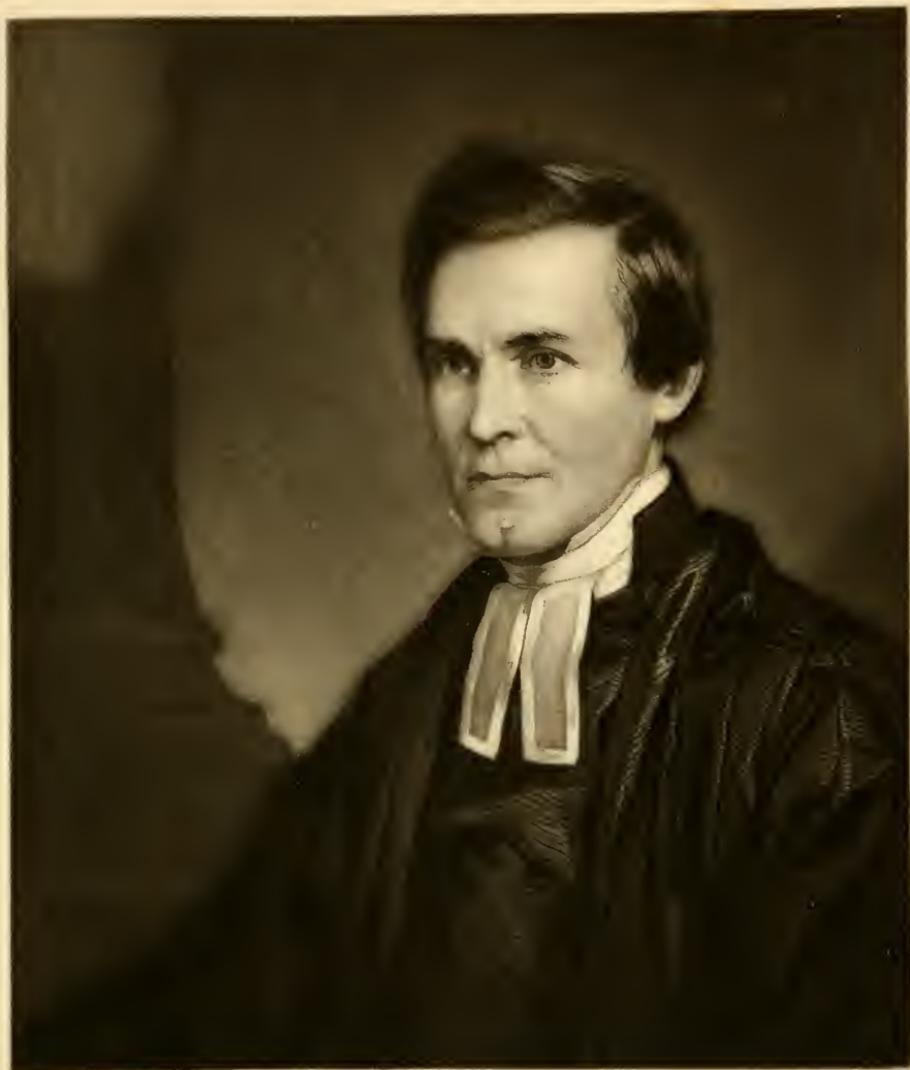
BY THE LATE

REV. JAMES H. FOWLES.

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Portrait of J. H. Fowles by G. S. [illegible] 1850

J. H. Fowles

Minister of the Church of the Evangelists, [illegible]

*J. W. Musgrave*

S E R M O N S

PREACHED IN THE

Church of the Epiphany,

PHILADELPHIA,

BY THE LATE

REV. JAMES H. FOWLES,

RECTOR.

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PHILADELPHIA:  
PRINTED FOR THE CONGREGATION.  
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THESE Sermons, printed in compliance with the earnest wishes of the Congregation, are merely a selection from the ordinary discourses, which their lamented author was accustomed to deliver, to the people of his charge.

No labor has been bestowed in polishing the diction or in otherwise revising them for the press. Having neither the desire, nor the authority, to modify or to omit a single sentence, the work of the Editors has been limited to the correction of the proof-sheets.

As they came from his pen, and were pronounced by his lips, they are now submitted to his friends.





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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

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To enable us to refresh our own memory of past lessons of instruction, to transmit to our posterity a knowledge of the truth taught by our late beloved pastor and dear friend, and to give still wider circulation to his teaching through the medium of the press, are the motives which have led to the publication of the Sermons comprised in the volume now presented to the reader. It has been thought to be not inappropriate to preface these discourses by a very slight sketch of the life and character of one, of whom it may truly be said, that he was without guile, and that as was his teaching, such was also his faith and such were his works.

Seeking not the honor which cometh from man, but only that which God giveth, he became a powerful illustration of the truth, that God will honor those who thus honor him; desiring to reflect the glory of Jesus, and not to display his own worth, he became under the influence of divine power, a mirror, from which were reflected with unusual clearness, and freedom from defect, the bright rays of the sun of righteousness.

Of his personal history we know but little; modest and humble, he set but little value on his own ability considered separately from the grace bestowed. He never spoke of himself, not even in those terms of disparagement in which self-righteousness sometimes envelops itself; and while he everywhere left traces as he passed, of an influence such as few exert, whether we consider it in kind or degree; those traces were like the flowers and fruits which follow the sunshine and the rain, silent, yet living witnesses of a blessing which

came and passed and disappeared; giving and hoping for nothing again.

Henry Fowles, a Lieutenant in the British army, and grandson of an officer of some distinction in the service, married a young American girl who had been left an orphan at an early age, and himself died at the age of twenty-two, leaving an only infant son, James Henry Fowles, born at Nassau, N. P. Mrs. Fowles, who is spoken of by those who knew her as a woman of more than usual intelligence, was a member of the Presbyterian church. Of the character of Lieut. Fowles, no traces are left in this country. He had displeased his family by his marriage, and no intercourse was maintained with the widow, who received the pension allowed to families of officers of the rank of her husband during her life. The infant was baptized by a clergyman of the Church of England to which the father belonged.

When James was four years old his mother returned to the United States, and continued until her death to reside with a female relative at St. Mary's, Georgia. Mrs. Fowles lived to witness the completion of her son's college course, and the commencement of his Theological studies. While on a visit to New Haven at the time he graduated, she took a violent cold, and died in a few months after her return to St. Mary's.

To the relative above referred to, his only maternal one, Mr. Fowles always expressed himself as being under great obligations, and while he often spoke of her in terms of grateful affection, he for the rest of his life ministered to her comfort.

His mother's pension aided in his support and education until her death, when it was discontinued.

From the kindly influence of the Rev. Mr. Pratt, the Presbyterian clergyman at St. Mary's, and an intimate friend of his mother, Mr. Fowles was at the age of fourteen years transferred for the completion of his education

to Yale College, New Haven, where he is believed to have devoted himself to mathematical studies with the design of entering the British army. Little is now known of his career there beyond the important fact that he was a diligent student; industrious and persevering; always prepared with his recitations; and one who commanded the profound respect of all who knew him, for his honesty, his manliness, integrity and sterling worth.

He graduated with the class of 1831, having previously, in common with many other members of it, been made the subject of strong religious impressions, by which he was led to devote himself to the service of the Lord, in the ministry of His Word. His first religious impressions having been received while at college, he remained at New Haven, and after having taken his degree in Arts, prosecuted his Theological studies under the direction of the Rev. Dr. Taylor, Professor of Theology. When they were completed, he placed himself under the care of the Presbytery of New York, by whom he was licensed to preach. Soon after, in the year 1833, he went to Beaufort, South Carolina, on a visit to a friend.

In the year 1831, Beaufort and the adjoining district had been visited by one of those special outpourings of the Holy Spirit which have been vouchsafed in every age of the church in various degrees, and under various ministrations. In this instance it had commenced in the Episcopal Church, and extended to other denominations, until nearly the whole community were brought under its power. This was no evanescent excitement. To the present day its effects are felt, not only in the district in which it began, but throughout the church. Bishops, priests and deacons in our own communion, as well as clergymen in other denominations, still testify to its heavenly origin, by lives consecrated to the service of God. This is not the place to record the history of its rise and progress. On Mr. Fowles the effect was at

once strong and permanent. The beauty and fulness of the prescribed services of the Episcopal Church, arrested his attention, and their adaptation to the condition and necessities of man approved them to his judgment; and though satisfied until the end of life, of the validity of the orders of other churches, he sought and received ordination from the Rt. Rev. Bishop Bowen.

He was soon after settled in the charge of a rural parish in South Carolina, and while there, passed through those deep trials to which he never referred, except in general terms, and which led him to adopt so strongly the peculiar views which he felt it his duty to enforce in all his subsequent ministry. His highly trained and logical mind would not rest satisfied without tracing out his system of doctrine in all its bearings, and so entire was the conversion of his heart, that with the simplicity of a little child, he received and acted upon what he believed he had been taught of God, however much it might conflict with the views and feelings of an unsanctified nature.

His first ministerial charge was the parish of St. John's, Berkley, from which, after a few months, he removed to Edgefield district, where also he remained but a short time; yet not so short, but that even there he left a living testimony to the power of his ministry in the hearts of those who still cherish his memory with affectionate gratitude.

From this parish, which was in some sort a missionary station, he was called to Wilton in the year 1836, and there married Miss Matilda Maxey, of Beaufort, S. C.\* His interest in the souls of all the members

\* This lady, connected with the oldest families in the State, was the daughter of Milton Maxey, of Beaufort, who was the youngest brother of Rev. Dr. Maxey, first president of Brown University, and afterwards President of Columbia College, S. C., a brother also of the Hon. Virgil Maxey, Solicitor of the U. S. Treasury, and Minister to Belgium, and the intimate friend of the Hon. John C. Calhoun.

of the human family, led him at this time to devote himself with great assiduity to the duty of preaching to the negroes on the plantations, and them he served freely; riding a long distance on each Sabbath, and crossing a river to minister to this charge, and the same day repeating the long and exhausting journey on his return. This was to avoid remaining at a place, which on account of the miasma, would in the summer time be certain death to the white man, exposed to it for a night. Mr. Fowles left numerous attached friends in this parish, and the church grieved to lose his devoted ministrations.

In 1841 he was called to St. Bartholomew's parish, S. C., of which parish Walterboro' is the summer residence. Here he ministered for nearly five years, and his ministry was greatly blessed. In this parish reside some of the wealthiest and most highly educated families in the State. By all, he was esteemed as a faithful, upright, and earnest minister of Christ; however offensive the doctrines he taught. By very many, his ministry was, through grace, received in heart-felt approbation; and the memory of it, is to this day, fondly, reverently, and gratefully cherished. During his residence in this parish, two especially remarkable conversions took place; the subjects of both of which, are now in the ministry of the Episcopal Church, able ministers of the New Testament, and faithful ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this parish Mr. Fowles continued until his removal to Philadelphia. The following letters written while Rector of Saint Bartholomew's are here introduced as they exhibit his views on points of great importance. They were addressed to a lady who had designed uniting herself to the Communion of the Presbyterian Church; but was induced by the solicitation of friends to inquire from Mr. Fowles what were the considerations which had led him to give a preference to the Protestant Epis-

copal Church. The advice given, and the reasons assigned for it, are as far removed as possible from the views of those who claim for Episcopacy an exclusive right to the name and offices of the church; while they yet exhibit a high appreciation of the peculiarities by which the Episcopal Church is distinguished; and an earnest devotion to her interests. It is believed his further acquaintance with the influences of the various organizations, by which the Church of Christ is divided, strengthened, rather than weakened the views here expressed.

*Walterboro', 5th May, 1843.*

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

I the more regret the necessity of your not paying us your expected visit, as an hour or two's conversation on the subject of your letter, would perhaps be more satisfactory than as many closely written reams of paper. Looking however to the Lord for his blessing on these inferior means (which are the best the circumstances allow) and feeling my utter insufficiency to guide myself, much less to lead others, I will venture to send you a few thoughts, fearing that they may reach you too late for any practical purpose (as you refer to your wish of being baptized next Sunday,) yet praying that if this be so, you may have that divine help which you will need, whatever human instrumentality be used.

It is a solemn and momentous act to number ourselves with the people of God. May I beg you, before you take this step (whatever denomination of Christians be finally chosen) to be sure that you feel the utter corruption of your nature, and the guiltiness of your entire life in the sight of the Holy God? On this point examine yourself by such texts as Gen. vi., 5; Rom. iii., 9—20; viii., 7, 8, and 2 Cor. iii., 5. If the Spirit has thus unveiled to you your natural state, you surely have felt

your unfitness to meet God at his bar, and some dreadful apprehensions in view of it. See Job xxiii. 15, and Ps. cxix. cxx. While oppressed with the sense of guilt, have your eyes been opened to see Jesus, the Son of God, enduring in his person as your substitute, the penalty of sin? Have you by faith rolled the burden of your sin's guilt upon him? As though relieved of an oppressive weight, has your spirit then been lightened? Did you then view God no longer as an offended Judge; but as a reconciled Father; one with whom you were at peace: with whom you could walk as two who are agreed: whom you loved with some degree of the affection, which creatures should have towards their Creator, and the redeemed towards their Redeemer? Is. liii. 5, 6; 2 Cor. v. 21; 1 Pet. ii. 24; Rom. v. 1; viii. 15, 16; 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. Has it since been your delight to have fellowship with the Father and the Son? 1 John, i. 3. In prayer? Phil. iv. 6. In reading the Scriptures? Ps. i. ii. And whenever God seems to hide his face, and his word appears to you a sealed book, do you feel with Job, (xxix. 2, 3,) "Oh! that I were as in months past; as in the days when God preserved me: when his candle shined upon my head, and by his light I walked through darkness?" Do you feel repentance for the past, and are you steadfastly purposed to lead a new life? 2 Cor. vii. 10. Does sin which still remains within, afflict you more than anything else? Rom. vii. 24. Do you long for heaven more on account of the immaculate purity you will there attain, than for aught else? Ps. xvii. 15. Are you determined to come out from the world, and be separate—feeling the necessity of this as well in obedience to God, as for your own happiness, and growth in grace? 2 Cor. vii. 17; 1 Cor. xv. 33. Do you trace this great change in yourself entirely to the Spirit of God? John iii. 15; vi. 44. Do you depend entirely on him for strength to persevere? 2 Cor. iii. 5. Do you

still feel hourly your need of the application of the purifying and justifying blood of Jesus Christ to your soul? 1 John i. 7-10. *These, these* are the all-important points. Be satisfied on these. Then, look up! Your expectations will never be cast off. But you will be directed by an unerring hand. Do not, however, act on the point, on which you have consulted me, until you have some good ground to hope it is with you, as the previous questions and references imply, as the Scriptures, and I their unworthy minister, desire it to be. If you begin thus, all will continue, and end well. The covenant into which you will have entered with God will have been sufficient; Heb. viii. 8-13. But if not, there will only be disappointment in life and death.

Referring, then, the examination of your feelings and state, to yourself and God, I proceed on the supposition and hope, that after proving yourself thus, you will be able to look up with confidence through Jesus: and say, "Abba, Father, I am thy child." On second thoughts, however, may I not beg you to allow me to defer giving you my views on the point about which you have written, until you let me know, what is the result of your examination, about the work of grace in your own soul; with the tests of which I have endeavored to supply you in this letter? You will not, I hope, be dissatisfied with this short postponement; as excess of caution on so important a subject, is, perhaps, preferable to precipitancy: and the interchange of feelings and views, on these points, often leads to great results. While I am sensible of my unfitness for the task you have entrusted me with, yet I am none the less grateful for this mark of your confidence; and it will always be my pleasure and duty to contribute such help to your furtherance in the Christian journey as may be in my power.

In your anticipated visit to your friends, and in the gaieties usual to such occasions, you will perhaps find

trials, and experience your need of grace. ——— desires to be affectionately remembered to yourself, and your father's family; in which of course, I unite. That the Spirit may be with you in self-examination, and that you may have reason to conclude that a saving change has been wrought within you by his mighty power, although it may not have been carried to the extent and perfection that you wish, is the prayer of

Your sincere friend in Christ,

J. H. FOWLES.

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Walterboro, 29th May, 1843.

My dear ———

The confidence reposed in me, in unfolding your mind so unreservedly on the subject of your late letter, is duly appreciated. I thank God, through Jesus Christ his Son, that he has, as I trust, revealed to you in some degree, your naturally fallen state, and at the same time disclosed to your view the Saviour. Be not however content. The heart is deceitful. Pray that the work may be genuine and thorough. Rest not satisfied with man's judgment; nay, like St. Paul, judge not yourself, but let him that judgeth you be the Lord. And even when you obtain, as I hope you soon will, the full assurance of faith, still press onward in holiness and zeal, and enjoyment of Him who hath called you. Walk near, live daily with *Jesus*. Let him be your constant counsellor and friend, and he will not suffer you to stray, nor let the waters overwhelm you.

In relation to the subject on which I led you to expect a letter, it would perhaps be better for you to give you my own experience, than to treat it *didactically*. I was born in the Episcopal church, and baptized by one of her ministers; but my mother soon removed from the

place of my nativity to a village in Georgia, where there was no church of that denomination. Her own mind was not religiously impressed until some years after, and then her views of the Christian life were so different from those which had been adopted and practised upon by the minister and people of the *particular* Episcopal church that she was formerly acquainted with, that she hastily concluded formality and worldliness pervaded the whole communion. I was brought up with these sentiments in relation to the church, and after my own mind and heart were changed, there were perhaps no reasons to remove my prejudices; I accordingly studied in a Congregational seminary, and was licensed to preach the Gospel by a Presbytery. Soon after, however, I paid a visit to Beaufort, in this State, when I became acquainted with some of the most spiritually minded Christians that I ever met with; and the church in all her institutions, but especially in her liturgy, was recommended to me in a way in which I had never viewed her before. I was led to examine into her organization and claims. The result was, that I became convinced the constitution of her ministry was more Scriptural than that of the denomination with which I was connected, and that the appointment of one of the clergy to the supervision of affairs in general, and to a defined pre-eminence, prevented that contest for influence and power which I had observed under the Presbyterian organization, where you know there is but one grade in the ministry. I will add that the experience of several years has only confirmed me in this opinion. In relation to the Liturgy, I soon found, that instead of its being necessarily a mere form and an invariable clog to true devotion, it was, when the spirit of the worshipper had been prepared for worship by the Spirit of God, a channel in which the soul could move unfettered in her freest moments: and to such a worshipper, it became a standard which allured him to

elevate rather than lower his feelings, when in a depressed mood. Instead of its frequent repetition making it lose its effect, I think that up to the present moment, I have found its happy influence increasing rather than diminishing. Its spirituality, alas! is but little known by the great body of Episcopalians themselves. I would recommend to your perusal a little work on the subject, published originally, without the name of the author, in England, and edited, within two or three years in this country, by Mr. Walker, of Beaufort, entitled: "Prayers of the Church." I would further say, that *when Episcopal piety is genuine*, I think I have observed more meekness characterizing it than when it is met with in other folds—more in the spirit of Newton, whose letters I remember to have given to one of you when I was with you, than we discover elsewhere; and this, I think, is legitimately traced to her institutions,—but I cannot enlarge. If then it had pleased the Lord to frame the spirit of your brother, as I trust he has yours, and he was about to enter the ministry, I would not hesitate to recommend the Episcopal church to his preference; neither would I hesitate to council you in the same way, if I thought you would be under an evangelical influence by connecting yourself with the church in your city. It has been a subject of no little anxiety with me, what to say to you in reply. I have concluded, after giving you as full a statement as my limits of time and paper would admit, to throw the responsibility of the choice entirely on you, on whom of course, however clear the matter might be to me, it ought to, and must finally rest; and simply to indicate in the form of a question, the course which I think, if followed with a right spirit, might be blessed to you and all concerned. Might you not connect yourself with the Episcopal church, and for the present receive your counsel and direction more immediately and exclusively from God. I mean, without

dependence on ministerial aid? Might it not be your object to elevate meekly in conversation and by example, the tone of feeling and living among your fellow communicants? Might it not be your prayer, that God, by his Spirit, should change the views and feelings of the pastor in relation to the truth as it is in Jesus, or in his own good time send you a shepherd who will follow nearly and clearly in doctrine and life, the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls?

In the meantime, might you not determine to hear as frequently as circumstances permit, the truth in its simplicity and force, which alone is able to build you up in the most holy faith, preached by Presbyterian ministers, and others who may have been taught from above? There are, I am aware, many objections to this course, and if, in view of them, you decide differently from these suggestions, be assured your determination will give me pleasure and satisfaction, and you shall have my prayers that God may be with you, and bless and use you, wherever you go, to his own glory. Do not, however, decide yourself, without much prayer and study of the word. If you take the course indicated above, much will depend upon the books you read. Beware of bad advice on this subject. Let me recommend to you Bickersteth on Baptism and the Lord's Supper; Bishop Wilson of Calcutta, and Bishop Meade of Virginia, on Confirmation. \* \* \* \* \*

I remain, yours,

Faithfully and affectionately in the Lord,

J. H. FOWLES.

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The lady in question became a member of the Episcopal church, and continues a devout and interested worshipper in that body, whose connection she at first hesitated to adopt.

It was in the year 1845, that Mr. Fowles was called to the charge of the Church of the Epiphany, Philadelphia. The Rev. Dr. Tyng, by whose ministry it had been collected, had recently removed to New York, and great apprehension was entertained by many persons, lest the congregation should be scattered, from the difficulty of finding any one who could occupy the place of so devoted and eloquent a minister. The reputation of Mr. Fowles, for soundness of doctrine, clearness of teaching, richness of natural endowment, depth of mental culture, and holiness of life, having reached some of the members of the Vestry, through the Rt. Rev. Bishop Elliot, and the Rev. Dr. Walker, of Beaufort, the views of the Vestry were early turned towards him, and he was asked whether he would accept a call to the vacant rectorship. After some correspondence, and with many misgivings on his part, owing to the great changes of climate and labor involved, his sense of duty led to an affirmative reply; although his acceptance was for a time temporary and conditional.

But little intercourse was needed to win for him the affections of the people. The chances of travel threw him into association with one member of the Vestry, on his way to the North. The simple open guilelessness which was in so peculiar a degree his characteristic, secured for him a warm interest on the part of this gentleman and his family, and the same trait was everywhere productive of a similar influence, even during the short visit which he then made. The impression made by the first sermon which he preached was so decided, that the only feeling was one of apprehension lest he should shrink from the charge of the congregation, and the response to the unanimous call of the Vestry, which was not given till he had returned home, was waited for with no little anxiety.

It was no ordinary trial thus to sever the ties of friend-

ship by which he was bound to many of the loftiest intellects and purest hearts, to be found in Southern life, and to come among a strange people, to break to them the bread of life; and give himself to the preaching of the word, among those of whom he could not foresee whether they would gladly hear or scornfully reject. Taking to him the whole armor of God, and shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace, he stood forth the uncompromising champion of those views which are exhibited so clearly in the discourses now committed to the press. Although among those members of his flock whom he most loved and with whom he maintained the most frequent and kindly intercourse, as well as among the clergy of the city, who sympathized closely with him in other things, there were some who were not prepared to adopt all his doctrinal views, yet were there none to be found in either class, who could do other than revere the candour, the dignity, and the Christian grace, with which he adorned those doctrines which he felt bound to set forth, as in his deliberate judgment, the truth of God.

His friend, the Rev. Dr. Walker, of Beaufort, remarks, with reference to this subject:

“Coincidentally with the change in his ecclesiastical relations, began the change in his doctrinal views—a change, which not long after his ordination and entrance upon ministerial duty in a retired parish, was fully and strongly developed. It was not, however, as I happen to know, by any set and formal examination of the doctrinal system in which he had been trained, that he was brought to abandon that system. The change began, not so much in his intellect, as in his heart.

“There, in his heart, great discoveries in respect of God’s law and God’s holiness, and man’s guilt and helplessness, were made to him by the Holy Ghost, through Bible reading, and deep temptation, and terrible self-conflict.

“Aside from all humanly arranged systems, the work began and was carried on. It was simply God’s Spirit, taking the truth as it is in Jesus, and showing it unto him. It was, so to speak, the private interpretation of the Holy Ghost.

“His, consequently was the Theology of God,—a Theology which he rejoiced to find thoroughly embodied in the Thirty Nine Articles. In short he embraced that great body of divinity ‘Emmanuel, God with us,’ in whose glories his divinely quickened and illumined mind loved to expatiate, and to unfold which to God’s tried and conflicting people, as well as to sinners outlying in their blood and pollution, was ever the deep joy and earnest longing of his soul.”

This peculiar dispensation stamped the whole character of his future teaching, and he went forth to his work as a Minister of the Gospel, with the deep conviction that he was to preach “the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” to “a world lying in iniquity” “condemned already,” in which there is “none that doeth good, no not one;” a world wholly “under the curse” from which there was no deliverance for any but through Him who “was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” In connection with this view he was entirely convinced of the truth of the opinions held by St. Augustine of old, and by the whole body of the Reformers of the Sixteenth century; and deeply impressed with the conviction that he was “inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, to take upon him this office and ministry,” and that of necessity his preaching must be the “savour of life unto life, or of death unto death,” to all who heard, he not only engaged in his work with great earnestness, but constantly and diligently sought for those enlightening influences of the same Spirit, by which he had himself been quickened, to enable him rightly to divide the word of truth,

and to prepare the hearts of the people duly to receive the word taught. This it was, which stamped his preaching with a peculiarity, in strong contrast with the other features of his character. There was a very remarkable boldness and energy in the enunciation of his views, even when he was well assured they were such as would excite the enmity of the carnal mind, and prove folly to human wisdom. Yet in every other line of action he was modest, gentle, easily entreated, and willing to be guided by the judgment of others. Those who only knew him in the pulpit, and heard him declare God's controversy with sin, that he might awaken the slumbering sinner, and draw him to the only refuge provided from the storm of his righteous indignation,—who saw him there tear off the flimsy veil of self-righteous delusion, and display to the condemned transgressor the abominations of the deep recesses of his own heart,—could scarcely be made to believe how deep were his yearnings of soul over those whose guilt he thus proved, and how he longed for the salvation of those whose condemnation he thus endeavored to seal upon their own consciences. As the ambassador of Christ he would “persuade men,” and “knowing the terror of the Lord,” he desired the more earnestly to “beseech them to be reconciled to God.”

Deeply read in the mystery of human depravity, he yet ever acted towards man, in his intercourse with him, as though he believed all around him were free from guile; and on every subject, except those which came under his observation in his ministerial capacity, he was easily led. There he never shrank; and whether it was to say to a brother minister that the sermon he had just preached was destitute of the first principles of the Gospel of Christ, or to caution young disciples to beware lest they deluded themselves into a belief that they were

secure when they entered into covenant with God, by a mere outward connection with the church, and to warn them that by so doing they only increased their condemnation, he alike in either case, did violence to his natural feelings as a man, in obedience to his solemn conviction of duty as a servant of Christ.

The distinguishing peculiarity of his ministry was the earnest setting forth of the spotless purity of Jehovah, his absolute sovereignty, the necessity that sin should not go unpunished, the fullness, perfection and sufficiency of the atonement made by Jesus in the offering of himself once for all; the absolute necessity of the power of the Holy Ghost to quicken those who are dead, enabling them to call Jesus Lord, and thus to become by faith partakers of the righteousness which he has wrought for them by obedience to the law, in their behalf; and as the consequence of this faith, the sanctification of the soul by the indwelling of the Spirit in the heart of the believing child of God. His abhorrence of the tendency to convert the grace of God into an apology for sin was extreme, and equally great was his aversion to whatever had, in his apprehension, the slightest tendency to the exaltation of human merit. He was "like the prophet of old," "very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts."

There was no attempt on the part of Mr. Fowles to win popular applause. It was manifest that the simple motive by which he was impelled, was that which actuated the Apostle, and has since influenced so many of the noblest champions of the truth, "Wo is me if I preach not the Gospel." His labors were performed not unto man but unto God. Looking forward to the crown of righteousness as his reward in the day of the Lord Jesus, it was to him a very small matter to be judged of man's judgment. Yet, so much did his preaching commend itself to those who heard him, that his congregation

steadily increased until it was found necessary to enlarge the church, even then the largest of our denomination in the city, in order to meet the demand for additional seats.

His health was but feeble at the best, yet he labored without ceasing, not only in the public ministry of the pulpit, but in private, by letter and conversation; while his social visits among his people were always made occasions for instruction, not formally, but as the natural result of the fact that he was filled with the love of Christ. From the abundance of the heart the mouth spake, and the ripe fruits which were ready for every hand to pluck, while they proved that the tree was good by which they were produced, served for the nourishment of the spiritual life in the souls of those who were brought into association with him. Far as possible from any approach to repulsive harshness, there was yet that about him which repressed unseemly levity or trifling, while evident tokens of mental power invited to such conversation as should at once improve the understanding and elevate the affections.

There were no incidents of any peculiar prominence, which would give effect to the picture of his life. His career was one unbroken straightforward course of duties. The spring of 1849 found him with health so feeble, that it was thought desirable for him to enjoy some months of repose from the constant toil of ministerial effort, and he was induced to spend the summer in Great Britain, where he formed delightful Christian friendships with some who still cherish the recollection of his visit.

The letters which he wrote during his absence to his friends among the congregation at home, proved how strongly his heart beat in unison with the common throb of earthly emotions, while those addressed to the congregation in the weekly Prayer Meetings, manifested his

ever active sense of the responsibility of the ministerial relation.

He was ever ready to put constraint upon himself, when the cause in which he was engaged demanded the sacrifice. He had been very fond of the game of chess, and had become exceedingly skillful in it, and continued to find pleasure in it as a mode of relaxation, until he was challenged by a gentleman who declared he had never been beaten. After a long and hardly contested game Mr. Fowles checkmated his adversary, who was so mortified, and manifested such irritation at the result, that Mr. Fowles determined never again to engage in an amusement which gave rise to emotions so painful and unholy.

Feelings thus sensitive were often pained by the discharge of the duties of his office, which compelled him to sift carefully, and investigate closely, the minds and hearts of his people. One who knew him well, and who pursued his studies for the ministry under his direction, says of him, "About the season of confirmation his countenance bore a peculiarly anxious look; he seemed to be continually laboring under a fear lest he should admit into the fold of Christ, any who would bring dishonour on their profession; so jealous was he of the honour of his Lord. Of this he often spoke to me.

"Had it not been for this deeply seated feeling the number of his candidates might have been trebled. Those who went to solicit advice from him will testify to the cordial manner in which they were always received. He seemed to enter at once into the peculiar circumstances of the applicants, and to make their wants and cares his own." The writer adds the following beautiful tribute to the manner in which he discharged the most delicate pastoral duties.

"My mother wishes to bear testimony to the great profit and pleasure which she derived from his pastoral

intercourse. She will never forget the visit he paid her when bowed in affliction by a most awfully oppressive calamity. She had not before needed his words of consolation, and she thought he might even reprove the weakness which yielded to the yearnings of nature. When, however, he encouraged her still to pray and hope even against hope that God in apparent wrath still remembered mercy—when for a moment he seemed to forget the spiritual adviser, and to speak as one similarly affected, and alive to all those feelings which mark the sensitive heart, she felt that she had indeed found one who was not only a minister of Christ but a brother in the Lord.”

The more closely any were brought into relation to him, the more highly did they appreciate his character. Hence it was that he grew in the affectionate esteem of his parishioners, and of the clergy and laity who were most prominent in the councils of the Church in this diocese, until in the Convention of 1853, he was elected one of the delegates to the General Convention, which was to assemble in the autumn of that year. This commission he accepted without hesitation, not because of any overweening estimate of his own abilities, but from the earnest desire that the views he had embraced, and which he held to be inseparably connected with the life of the Church, should be represented as fully as possible. He would gladly have discharged those duties, but he bowed with humble acquiescence to the manifest appointment of God, which interfered.

A parishioner and intimate friend, in feeble health, once brought on a severe illness by undue exposure, in keeping an appointment at a distance, during a violent storm. His reproof was conveyed in this language. “Did you suppose yourself wiser than God? His Providence interposed an obstacle to which you should have bowed.” It was in the same spirit that he met the

illness by which he was himself laid aside from active duty.

The summer was spent in the country in pursuit of strength and renewed health, and he returned to the city in the month of September, in the full expectation of being able to go to New York, where the Convention was to assemble in October. An attack of remittent fever soon prostrated him, and gave opportunity for the development of the diseased tendency which he had inherited from his parents, and which he had always apprehended would cut short his days. A severe hemorrhage from the lungs, which occurred during the convalescence from the fever, marked the invasion of those organs by a disease which steadily progressed with unusual rapidity, until in the month of November it was found necessary to arrange for his speedy voyage to the South; not with any hope of recovery, but to place him in those circumstances, among relatives and friends, which would contribute most comfort to the few weeks of his decline. The following letter addressed from his sick and suffering bed on the eve of his sailing for Savannah, to the prayer meeting which assembled weekly in the Lecture Room of the Church, was his last ministerial effort.

“MY BELOVED PEOPLE,

I had intended to address a pastoral letter to my congregation, to be read before the entire Church, but unexpected weakness has deprived me of that privilege. Under these circumstances I send you a line, who meet weekly in this room for prayer. It will be short, but intimately concerning both you and myself. I know the interest which you take in my recovery; be affectionately reminded that it is in God's hands, and that prayer should be your chief reliance for His help. Much, however, will depend upon the character of the

prayer offered. There may be, even with the best of intentions, idolatrous prayer offered to the True God. This is the point to which I beg you to attend. If in asking my life, you regard it as essential to the carrying on of the work of God in your own souls, or to the edification of His Church, it will be most provoking to God, showing that you depend upon an arm of flesh. By *essential*, I mean that the spiritual blessings which you desire for yourselves or others of the congregation, can *never* be attained except through me. Beware of this feeling in your inmost heart. You can easily see how degrading such a feeling is to the Almighty and Gracious Spirit of our God, who works with, without, or against all means, as suits His sovereign will. If you have entertained it, and I have helped to foster it, there is nothing which will sooner tempt God to punish the idolater, and take the idol out of the way.

In the second place, regard me not even as *important* in your securing any spiritual blessing. This borders closely on the previous feeling, and though not equally sinful, it may require deep chastening from the Providence of God. That chastening may be His teaching you how easily He can bestow greater blessings through others than he has ever bestowed by me. "Paul may plant, Apollos water, it is God that giveth the increase."

I would have you feel that I am the merest instrument in the hands of an eternally gracious and covenant-keeping God. Still—an instrument beloved; one to whom God himself has attached you; to whose mode of ministration you have become now habituated, and find it more easy to profit by. If, with such feelings towards God and me, you approach the Throne of Grace, relying for acceptance upon the sole merits and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, you may pour out the tenderest emotions of your heart, and if it be

His pleasure you will be heard and answered, and I will yet be restored to my labours and your prayers.

Receive these intimations, my Christian friends, from one who feels exceedingly grateful for all the kindness which you have manifested towards him, during his pastoral supervision of this church; from one too, who would willingly be spared to labor longer among you in his Master's service, and who only wishes to give effect to your prayers.

Concerning yourselves, I leave you with firm confidence, that God will be the Shepherd of his own; and that He will help, when those who are regarded faithful by short-sighted fellow-men, are "minished from among the inhabitants of the earth." I commend you, therefore, to God and the Word of His Grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

From your affectionate Pastor,

J. H. FOWLES.'

From the time of his reaching his friends in South Carolina, till the hour of his dissolution, his sufferings were great. Soothed by the kindest and most unremitting attention to his bodily necessities, and comforted by the sympathy and support of Christian friends who ministered to him the consolations of the Gospel, he rapidly sank; giving daily evidence of the weakness of the flesh, but equally strong manifestations of the fact that his faith did not fail him, till he set his final seal to the truth of the ground of his hope, in the beautiful language addressed to his beloved wife: "I am going to Jesus, you must meet me there;" then placing his hand, already cold from the retrocession of the powers of life toward the inner citadel, he uttered slowly and distinctly the following memorable farewell. "The blessing of your husband's God be upon you! May he be with you

and help you in every trouble! May His Spirit guide you through your journey, in your passage to His Heavenly presence, where I will welcome you with open arms, and stand by when Jesus receives you into his Kingdom.”

Thus, on the evening of the Lord's day, March 25th, 1854, in the forty-second year of his age, he rested from his labours.

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The following extracts will exhibit the esteem in which he was held by the Bishop of the Diocese, and some of his brethren, while the unanimous action of the Clergy of the city proves that the estimate of his character thus expressed extended to them all.

The Rev. Dr. Stevens, in a sermon preached to his own congregation, shortly after the death of Mr. Fowles, observes, “That he possessed many marked and even exalted traits of personal and religious character. His mind was admirably furnished with knowledge, and disciplined to exact and careful thought. His attainments were extensive and varied,—and, peculiarly reflective in the habit of his mind, he brought to the subject which engaged his attention, a calm deliberation, a clear sighted reason, a poised judgment, which caused him to hold his opinions with modest meekness upon points of allowable difference, but to be tenacious of truth, as he understood it, in all its vital doctrines. His Theology was *eminently Biblical*. He called no man master, he sat at Jesus' feet and learned of him. And, though men named him this or that, according to their different stand-point of judgment, yet he followed blindly no master in Israel, and took unhesitatingly no dicta but the word of Christ. His doctrines were in the main the clear Scriptural doctrines of the English Church of the

seventeenth century. He sympathized with those who framed the sturdy faith of the Church of England, as embodied in the thirty-nine articles; and though it has been too much the fashion of those who wish to elevate man at the expense of God, and reason at the expense of revelation, and the Church at the expense of its divine Head, to decry the tenets of the fathers and confessors as too angular, too rigid, too austere,—yet these are in very truth the doctrines upon which, as upon a rock-like foundation the Church is built, because they are the doctrines of Jesus Christ and his apostles.

“These are indeed the true exponents of Gospel truth, and the glory, efficiency, and holiness of the Church, is in proportion to the earnestness and fidelity with which these strong points of divinity are received and maintained.

“Mr. Fowles was a bold and faithful proclaimer of ‘the whole counsel of God.’

“He sought not in his preaching to please men, but to win souls—not to satisfy a sense of professional duty, but to approve himself unto God—not to call out human encomiums, but by manifestation of the truth, to commend himself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. His sermons were full of the marrow of the Bible; they were massive with great truths, they were rich with the treasures of faith, they were fragrant with the out-poured ointment of the Saviour’s name, and were delivered with a simplicity and earnestness, which left deep impressions upon his congregation. Many others have made more show of their labors, and done works which covered more surface, but few have wrought such deep thorough heart work,—work, which will not, like the tracery of winter’s frost, melt away as soon as the sun is up, but that will endure through storm and strife, through joy and sadness, unto everlasting life.

“The more his people knew him, the more they loved

him,—for though reserved among strangers, he yet manifested great loveliness of character and deep affection of heart to all who were brought within his pastoral circle.”

Extract from the address by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Potter, at the funeral of Mr. Fowles.

“My brother beloved! How little did we think that when we met again we should meet as we do now! And how little did we think that the appeal then so earnestly urged from this pulpit should in so few months be so brought home to our hearts, from the coffin in this aisle! Who, indeed, shall be “baptized” in place of the “DEAD” who now lies before us! Where shall we again find the same unspotted life—the same resolute spirit—the same simplicity in proclaiming the deep convictions of the soul—the same wrestling with the angel of the presence for the sanctification of his own heart—the same gentleness and love combined with the same indomitable courage? “Who shall be baptized in the place of the dead?” And would that here and now a portion of his indomitable courage, his precision and firmness in the expression of what he deemed conscientious and right, his hatred for sin, and yet love for the sinner, his directness, and his profound sense of the corruption of human nature and its need of redeeming, renewing grace, might fall on us!”

The character of his mind and heart is beautifully delineated by one of his friends in the following passage:

“Mr. Fowles was indeed possessed of rare and eminent qualities, both of head and heart, with which our communion can but illy dispense, and the loss of which in his person is not the less signal from the fact that they were not such as at first struck the gross popular attention. He possessed, it is true, fine intellectual and

moral properties, but there are others who possess the same. That which was his distinguishing feature, both in intellect and character, was *singleness*. It was this that added firmness and precision to his naturally fine logical powers; and it is perhaps remarkable in his case, as in that of the great statesman of our own days who sprang from the same zone of territory, that in the luxuriance of a southern climate was generated an intellectual tissue so severely grained that even ornament found on it no flaw on which to fasten itself. And this, while it deprived him of many of those allurements which attract the superficial eye, was to the careful observer a great charm; for by making his train of reasoning transparent, it exhibited in its single majesty a clearness and severity of thought pre-eminently worthy to grapple with the intellect of earnest men engaged in the great work of seeking their soul's salvation. If passion there ever was, it was that which is evolved from earnestness—not that which produces it—that which is the result, not the stimulant, of intellectual power. And from this we can well turn to trace in its general relations the effect of the same dominant feature, which, while it gave to the intellect such direct power, shed on the character such winning sweetness. The same *singleness* displayed itself in every movement of his life. He was intent on his mission, and what is more, on nothing else. He had no collateral purposes. In his life, as in his preaching, there was no pause to watch the effect on others of what he did or said. In such a character modesty and fearlessness were essential ingredients; for what is there to such a man, on such a mission, in human applause under which to flutter, or in human displeasure at which to tremble.

“And hence it was, that while in his relation to his fellow men, his positiveness of theological perception forbade a merely sentimental fraternization, he never

failed to gain the respect and affection of those who received him within the range of a fair and manly observation. But there was something more, which those whose lot it was to be visited by him in sorrow never can forget. There was a John-like tenderness of heart, which the world is so unwilling to believe can be associated with a Paul-like positiveness of faith. And peculiarly became this the case as the setting sun—alas! when to others it seemed in its meridian height—was throwing its declining effulgence on its character. Those deep and distinct lineaments, which in his early ministry first struck the eye, while they continued to preserve their definiteness, were mellowed by a tinge of sweetness and love, which made his face no imperfect reflection of his character. Sad, indeed, is the lot of the Church, when such a man, scarcely beyond the fullness of youth—for he was not yet forty—is swept away from a field where such qualities are so much needed. And earnest, indeed, should be the prayer of all Christians, that they may receive grace to maintain the faith with that firmness and precision—that singleness and sweetness—that courage and innocency—with which it pleased the Lord most High to imbue his servant whom he has now taken away.”

The Rev. Kingston Goddard preached a sermon in his own church, commemorative of the character of Mr. Fowles, and repeated it in the Church of the Epiphany. From it we are permitted to make the following extracts:—

“Whilst in the character of the late Mr. Fowles there was much that was admirable; many traits were possessed by him of extraordinary worth, and in more than ordinary fullness. He was, for instance, intellectually, a man of strong powers. His reasoning faculties were not only prominent, but vigorous. Every subject inves-

tigated by him was thoroughly sifted, and clearly understood. His pulpit addresses from this peculiarity of his mind, being more logical than illustrative—doctrinal and didactic than hortatory and exciting. Thus he was a most instructive pastor, deeply versed in the doctrine of Christ, having a clear and discriminating understanding of divine truth. From a calm and patient investigation of the volume of Revelation, he was better fitted than most men of his age to discuss and explain the darkly revealed and mysterious doctrines of the Bible. All who waited casually upon his ministry were at once convinced that they were sitting under the teachings of no ordinary mind, whilst his own congregation evidently learned to value the teachings of a pastor, which were storing the mind with the rich truths of God's word, made clear and plain through his superior abilities. As a master workman in the great Temple of Grace, his was evidently not the genius to adorn and beautify, but the mind that directed the laying of the broad and strong foundations of truth. The sound of his trumpet of warning, as a watchman of God, may not have been as dulcet and silvery as some; but it was loud, full, clear and unrivaled in its distinctness; every note of which, as it trembled on the ear, gave a 'certain sound.' Regarding him, with reference to his intellectual powers merely, in his death we feel that a great light has been extinguished in the Church of our God.

“There was one view of Gospel truth held by him that cannot be too strongly insisted upon. I allude to the acknowledgment of the existence of that impenetrable cloud that shuts out the more spiritual doctrines of scripture from the eye of merely *natural reason*. The unenlightened mind no more understanding the deep things of God than the unconverted soul appreciating and feeling them. For whilst the unsanctified but gifted intellect can understand and discuss many of the doctrines of

revelation, yet there is a point beyond which the merely natural intelligence, (however aided by learning,) cannot traverse. Once over that, and the mind is at sea, without compass, star or landmark to guide it. Among these truths the unlettered slave taught by the Spirit, is at home; whilst the most intellectual and learned, but not taught by grace, would confess, were they honest, as did Wm. Pitt to Wilberforce on hearing Newton preach, that they could not understand these things. This doctrine, the necessity of the agency of the Holy Spirit to enlighten the darkened mind of man, and to grant him new and clear views of Gospel truth, he, 'taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us,' our brother most clearly and determinately held. Not that the Spirit of God gives genius and talent to the mind of the Christian, nor any intellectual bestowment; except such as is the indirect result of dwelling upon the sublime, awful and pleasing themes of revelation. But that he does give the power of spiritual discernment, as St. John clearly states, 1 John ii. 27: 'Ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.' To this same teaching of the Spirit did he trace with grateful adoration his own views of the truth. Like Thomas Scott, he confessedly sought his instruction in divine things from God. With the mind of the Spirit he sought to have his own in accordance. Upon his experience, as one taught of God, as the result of means industriously used, he threw himself when in brotherly discussion; and a strong tower was it to the truth of God, against the conceptions of men.

"Necessarily did these views lead him to seek for the same aid to render his instructions effective to his people. His preaching always seemed to me to be based upon the declaration, 'Paul may plant, &c.' 'There is too

much of man, too much addressed to the mere man,' was his oft repeated sentiment to me, 'in modern preaching. It is not the *simple* truth of God; God,' he declared, 'would take care of his own truth; men want boldness, and some men honesty, in telling what they do know.' Referring to a well known and oft repeated anecdote: 'I,' said he, 'fully realize the feelings of that minister of God, who could not and would not go into his lecture room unless the Spirit went with him. I only am astonished,' continued he, 'that any minister of Christ can neglect this Spirit's aid in his work, or labor without the *realization* of his presence.' What a true and faithful servant of the Lord was he, therefore, necessarily to his people! Envied, indeed, were they who sat under such an instructor!

"Mr. Fowles was a man of deep and undoubted piety! Unhesitatingly do I confess that he seemed to live nearer to his God than any man that I have ever personally known, unless it were the spiritually minded Bedell. His piety was of an extraordinarily experimental depth! Whilst no one could be with him for a few hours and not feel that he was a man of God, those who were the most intimate with him had the highest estimate of his holiness. His was not a religion that was marked by certain exhibitions, as if it were a garment that we assume, to attract by its symmetry and beauty; it was seated deep in the hidden man of the heart, and was seen outwardly, as was the brilliancy of the face of Moses when it burst upon Israel, even through the meshes of the veil with which he covered himself withal; and like it, his inward light was the result of personal communion with his God.

"There were certain characteristics of this piety, that it will be profitable for us to notice. For instance, he was noted for an entire deadness to the world;—its pomp and power seemed to have no fascinations for him. He

entered upon office or left it, as if careless of the honor connected therewith; regarding office and position as only valuable, and as really desirable because affording the means of doing good, or of extending his views of truth. The fame of the world evidently had no attraction in his regard. The voice of praise or of condemnation fell with but little effect upon his ear, and altered not his straight forward purpose of duty. Satisfied only in securing for himself the smiles and commendation of his Master; to the will of God as revealed in his word or exhibited in his providences, he bowed with most entire submission. This became in him a remarkable trait as exhibited both in his conduct and teaching: so much so that if I had been called to inscribe a motto for him, it would have been, 'The Lord God omnipotent, reigneth.' The undisputed Sovereignty of God, always wise and merciful in its displays, whether through providence or in revelation, was a doctrine that was so fully admitted, that it shaped his character and tinged his preaching. Living or dying, sick or well, prospered or opposed, ever did he seem to feel that he was the *Lord's*. A touching instance, of which, I heard related: a friend stating that when he expressed his regret that he was not able to visit his church and see the convenience and elegance of those improvements that have been so recently made in this beautiful house of worship, his remark was, 'It is well, God has ordered otherwise!' It was more the spirit of gentle and sweet submission that was evidenced, than the mere sentiment, that affected the narrator. An instrument merely in God's hand, did he regard himself; having no more right to dictate to him than has the 'saw to demand of him that shaketh it, what doest thou?' Such views rendered him always cheerful under opposition and calm under trial; they proved his support and stay when the

last great struggle with sickness and death was entered upon.

“And lastly, our departed brother was eminently a man of prayer. It seems almost superfluous to make such a statement, after what we have already said about the peculiarities of his piety. But prayer with him, whether for others or himself, seemed to be, according to the beautiful expression of one of our hymns, ‘his vital breath and native air.’ It was not a talking to God, as if he needed information from man, but a presentation of want to him who alone could relieve it. The honest, earnest, submissive entreaty of the waiting and hungry soul; he evidently having drunk in, to its fullness, the instruction of his Master: ‘When ye pray, use not vain repetitions,’ &c. For so earnest, simple and truthful were his supplications to God, as offered in our monthly clerical meetings for prayer, that with his voice the soul of the one kneeling beside him was insensibly born upward to the mercy seat for relief, and gently brought into the presence of the great and gracious Jesus. That such a man living must have been a faithful and devoted minister of Christ, follows as a matter of course from the possession of the traits of character which we have described: and that he should have been accounted faithful in his ministry when he was called from his earthly stewardship, ‘and showed his Master of these things,’ we cannot doubt. His work and his labors are over, his trust performed, and he is at rest.”



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S E R M O N S.

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# SERMON I.

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## REASONS FOR THE FREE FORGIVENESS OF SIN.

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Isaiah i. 18.

“COME NOW, AND LET US REASON TOGETHER, SAITH THE LORD: THOUGH YOUR SINS BE AS SCARLET, THEY SHALL BE AS WHITE AS SNOW; THOUGH THEY BE RED LIKE CRIMSON, THEY SHALL BE AS WOOL.”

THE meaning and application of this text will be perceived, if we propose and answer three inquiries.

The first of these is: *What class of persons does God here invite to come and reason with him?*

The second is: *What is the subject upon which he invites them to reason with him?*

And the third is: *What do the Scriptures show is the uniform reasoning on this point between them and God?*

We must first show, *what class of persons God here solicits to come and reason with him.*

This gracious invitation and assurance was addressed to persons in a peculiar state of mind. What that state of mind was, may be gathered from the context. From the beginning of the chapter to the close of the tenth verse, the most unqualified charges of sin had been brought by our prophet against the people to whom he had been sent, and the most overwhelming calamities threatened. The effect of these denunciations upon some was to produce an outward reforma-

tion: they offered "multitudes of sacrifices;" they brought "oblations" and "incense;" the "new moons and Sabbaths" were rigidly observed; religious "assemblies" were frequently called. This, however, was not the change desired and required by God: they were asked by his inspired servant, the prophet, "To what purpose" were these? even their "solemn meetings" were regarded as "iniquity," and their worship as "vain" and an "abomination." The nature and rejection of this mistaken and superficial reformation are described from the eleventh to the sixteenth verses. Thus, the prophet was commissioned to announce what was expected at their hands, if they would ensure their own acceptance and salvation; this was a thorough and heartfelt renunciation of their wickedness, and a sincere and earnest obedience to all the commands of God. In the concise and abrupt style of the prophet, it is not explicitly stated what impression his faithful explanation of the requirements of God produced; but every spiritual mind readily perceives, that they, who were thus instructed and exhorted, are supposed to have diligently heeded all that was advanced; to have been filled with strong desires for holiness, and to have made earnest efforts to discharge the duties which were enjoined. But far different were the views which this class of the prophet's hearers entertained of the standard at which God required them to aim, and of their own inability to comply with the divine precepts, from those with which that portion of the people were possessed, who, we have seen, thought that mere outward reformation and a specious attention to certain prescribed duties would suffice. They

evidently were deeply convicted of the utter failure of all their attempts to please and glorify their God; they had sunk into the very depths of despondency, both on account of their want of power to keep the commandments of God, and of their being unable to rid themselves of the guilt of those sins, which by their frailty they had committed. It was just when they had reached this state of self-despair, regarding themselves as utterly unfit for communion with the holy God, and unable to qualify themselves for such an exalted privilege—above all, not seeing how it was possible for the just God to pardon iniquity, that the cheering words of our text were uttered: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Such, then, is the class of persons whom God condescendingly asks to come and confer with him. Those of you, my beloved friends, are included in this invitation, who by God’s Spirit through his word, have been deeply impressed with your own sinfulness and guilt, your own utter helplessness, and your want of power to comply with God’s requirements in his law, and who under these convictions, are ready to cry out in despair, “What must we do?” It is you, whom God persuades in our text to come and reason with him.

But, in the second place, *What is the subject on which he invites you to such a blessed conference?* It is nothing else than the assurance, with which he follows up his invitation to you to come and reason with him.

The subject is this promise in our text; "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

How graciously pertinent and full too, is this divine assurance to those who are in such a state of mind! The convictions of those who were here addressed, we are now prepared to admit, corresponded with the charges, which the Spirit, through the prophet, had just made; they saw and felt, that "from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there was no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they had not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." In this state of guilt and loathsomeness, of which they had only become conscious, by God's partial disclosure of himself to them in his holiness and justice, they felt wholly unprepared to be admitted to his fellowship, or even to appear before his eye. Their unsuccessful attempts, too, to cleanse themselves from their pollutions, had only deepened their despondency. How unexpected, how welcome, then, must the words before us have been, as they proceeded from the mouth of God! Pity and grace then filled and actuated the Almighty's heart. Yet there is no attempt on his part to palliate their convictions. On the contrary, it is clearly implied, that they had been far from exaggerating their ill-desert; their sins are admitted, as you perceive in our text to be of a "red" hue, which had always been recognized as peculiarly emblematical of guilt, possibly from the fact that it is the color of blood, the shedding of which has in every age been considered as the

greatest of crimes. Hence, it was that the heifer, which, according to St. Paul, was an eminent type of Jesus Christ the great sin-bearer, (and the mere touching of which rendered the priest unclean till evening.) was required to be of unmixed red; thus intimating that the people for whom it was typically to be offered as a sacrifice, were sinners, as guilty as if their hands were dyed with blood.

But the Spirit of God proceeds on the supposition in our text, that the sins of these convicted and almost despairing souls were of the deepest red; "though your sins," says he, "be as scarlet; though they be red like crimson." There is, therefore, no conceivable, no possible case of guilt not embraced in these all-inclusive words. If the soldier that pierced the side of our breathless Lord had been aware whose that dead body was—if he had been immersed in the stream which issued from the wound, and had come to reason with God while thus dyed with the blood of the Only-Begotten—yet our text, you observe, makes no exception to him, even while his hands were still red with that priceless blood. There is no description of sin or sinner excluded by our God in this proclamation of his grace: the profane, with all his heaven daring and irreverence for sacred things; the unfeeling, with all his murderous and piratical deeds; the moral, with all his sins of heart against light and conscience—whatever peculiar enormity each may perceive in his own case, however desperate each may consider his own state—all, all without exception are comprehended in the terms of God's free grace adopted in our text; "though your sins be as scarlet; though they be red like crimson."

Neither, we would have you also remark, was the remission of these scarlet and crimson sins to be partial, or superficial, or temporary, or future. The washing to which they would be subject in the gracious interview to which they were here invited by God, would result in no modification of their intensely deep color, so that they should become of a paler red: those who should receive the assurance were to be "as white as snow," to be "as wool," the well known emblems of spotless holiness and purity. This change was to be wrought not only in appearance, so as to deceive man; but it was to be real, to be pronounced such by him, to whose eye all things are open and naked. It was not to last only for a time; it was to be a gift without repentance on the part of the giver, from one with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning. It was not to be postponed to a distant day; the invitation was "Come now." It is surely, then, the most boundless and unexceptionable offer of mercy that language can extend or thought conceive. Proceeding, too, directly as it did from the mouth of him with whom they had to do, all that remained for these guilty and despairing souls was forthwith to rejoice and accept. One would think it needed no reasoning to induce them to accept it. Far different, however, was the reception which these glad tidings met. It seems only to have excited unbelieving hesitancy and doubt: for, in order to dispel these, they are invited to come and reason upon the subject with their God. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord;" it shall be my endeavor, says the Lord, to remove the objections and obstacles which you raise

against your own full salvation and my free grace; and to convince you, that if my offer be embraced, you shall realize the assurance which I give. The special objections which these unbelieving and despairing sinners advanced are not recorded by the inspired pen; neither are those arguments stated by which God convinced them of his truthfulness in this instance, and of his uniform readiness to forgive those who repent and turn. These can merely be judged of, by the light which experience and Scripture throw upon the subject generally. Let us, then, guided by these, inquire with all possible brevity, in the third place :

*What are the reasonings by which the convicted soul establishes itself in the unbelief and rejection of God's full, free and explicit offer of pardon; and what are those by which God strives to show it, that all fears and doubts are unfounded, and that it will experience, in the very act of trusting, all the promised grace.*

In pointing out a few of the reasons which prevent a man, who is convicted of his sins, from confiding in God's gracious assurances of free forgiveness, we by no means maintain, that he is conscious of them himself; much less, that he formally pleads them before God, as an excuse for his want of faith; and yet, if these secret grounds of his unbelief were removed, there would remain nothing on which it could rest. That our subject, therefore, may present itself in an effective way, let us consider the unbeliever as boldly urging in his defence the real causes of his distrust.

And, first, it would be only in accordance with the true state of the case, if the convicted sinner should

excuse his doubts of God's free forgiveness, by pleading *the voice of conscience in his soul*. Nor would his argument on this point be without plausibility or apparent force. He might urge something like the following in his defence: "Is not my conscience the best inward guide that my fallen nature now possesses? Whenever I have strayed from the path of duty, it has been the first to check me, nor could I gain its approbation, until I had ceased to do the evil, and began again to do well. Both in its accusations and excuses it has proved itself a faithful friend. I have thus been led to regard it as the very voice of God. Moreover, through its agency, I have been brought to my present sense of guilt. In vain would any charges from an outward source have been laid at my door, unless conscience had taken them up and applied them inwardly, showed their justness and awakened my convictions and fears. I would now have been recklessly pursuing my previous course of sin, instead of thus condemning myself, if I had not been apprehended by conscience and dragged before the bar of God. Is not this faithful representative, therefore, of the one with whom I have to do, worthy of my confidence? Now, whenever I attempt to lay hold upon the promise of free forgiveness by my God, there is a whisper from this trustworthy monitor in my soul, that there is no way of escape from that curse which I have brought upon myself; that God could not be just, if he should justify such a transgressor as myself. Now, God hath said, 'I change not.' Can, therefore, his word in the Gospel contradict his voice which I hear in my own soul? Must there not be some misapprehension or

mistake? Though unable to detect any, and hence in a strait betwixt two, yet it is safest for me to confide in the inward voice of my God, if what professes to be his outward word sets itself up in opposition. I had better then, sink with the truth, than buoy myself with a false hope."

"Nor," as this convicted soul, now siding with God and assiduously bent on its own punishment and destruction, may well continue, "Nor is this all. For the very *law of God* itself, as contained in his revealed word, coincides with all the teachings of conscience in this matter. It is, indeed, because the law met me with charges and denunciations, that conscience itself became enlightened and raised these convictions in my soul. 'Nay, I had not known sin but by the law: for I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.' How severe and unexcepting too, are the denunciations which proceed from the mouth of the great Lawgiver: 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all;' and again, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.' Here, then, is the very word of God in opposition to itself. Should I not, therefore, receive that portion of the Scripture which agrees with all of God that there is left in my fallen soul, rather than with that which is diametrically opposed to all that I know and feel?"

"Besides," says the unbeliever, bringing his reasonings to a conclusion, "this Gospel revelation of a God who freely forgives, and who receives the sinner into a saving and close relationship with Himself, is *con-*

*trary to every conception of God that I have ever formed, whether I consulted my own understanding, the teachings of nature, or what I read of him in many parts of his own word. From all these sources I learn, that God is One, who 'will by no means clear the guilty,' 'who cannot look upon iniquity,' and 'in whose sight the foolish cannot stand.' These declarations forever exclude me from his presence and favor. For I recognize in myself all that is here denounced. I feel myself utterly unworthy of his adoption and grace. If, moreover, I were received into fellowship with him, I could not enjoy such communion; my soul would shrink from it, as my tastes are unholy, and my fears would prompt the cry of Peter, if God should draw nigh, 'Depart from me, O Lord; for I am a sinful man.' How, then, can I ever be expected to cast my soul and its eternal interests upon the bare assurance of these unqualified words: 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool?'"*

Such, then, if he would only put them into logical language and shape, are the convicted sinner's reasonings with a God ready to pardon. As thus put, it is indeed a strong case: much too strong to be set aside by his own, or any other creature strength. Even the reasons which God urges to prove the possibility and truthfulness of his own promise of forgiveness, will fall powerless on the sinner's ear, unless the Holy Spirit clothe them with energy, and with his personal demonstration apply them to the soul. Earnestly praying, then, for his effectual accompaniment, and

armed with his own word, I will venture here to be to you, convicted and despairing soul, obstinate and gloomy in your unbelief, to be to you in God's stead, and in his behalf to repeat the invitation in our text : "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord."

And as a sufficient refutation of all that you have said, God urges, first, *the authority of his simple word*. "I am not a man," saith the Lord, "that I should lie; nor the son of man that I should repent. Have I said, and shall I not do it? Have I spoken, and shall it not come to pass?" "It is the province of becoming humility on your part to trust with an unshaken confidence in every hope that I hold out, in every promise that I make, and not to meet it with counter reasonings and influences. My declarations and requirements and purposes must necessarily often appear to a finite understanding like yours, to clash with each other. Under such circumstances, it is your privilege to hope against hope, like Abraham, who, when commanded to take a knife to slay his son, obeyed, although he had been promised, that from that very same son an innumerable posterity should descend. This necessity of trusting me implicitly is laid upon you, and will be through eternity, by the very law of your created being. If this be so in every matter, how emphatically is it the case in those deep things, on which, to your own discomfiture, you have just presumptuously dared to darken counsel by words without knowledge! The defence of your unbelief was devised entirely by your fallen pride. It may appear plausible in the eyes of the carnal. It may

serve to rivet the fetters of your unbelief and condemnation. It might justly provoke me to leave you to your own heart's lusts, and to the despair to which you so tenaciously cling. But the same grace which prompted me to hold out the hope of forgiveness, induces me to remove all your reasonings by pointing out to you what you should already have discovered in the Gospel, that the province of the law and of conscience, and of all those disclosures of my holiness and justice which I have made, either in my word or in any other way, is, so far as the salvation of my redeemed is concerned, only to work in them the precise effect which you profess now to experience in yourself—utter despair of deliverance by any attempt on your own part to satisfy my claims. They were intended simply to shut you up unto faith: to act as a schoolmaster to bring you unto Christ, that you might be justified by faith. To the foot of my incarnate Son's cross I lead you in the Gospel. On it, he bears all your guilt. He has been made a curse for you, to redeem you from the curse of the law. As he has thus been made a propitiation for your sins, I may yet be just, though I justify the ungodly who believe in Jesus. You thus discover the grounds upon which the justice of my free forgiveness of your sins rests. When, therefore, I now assure you, that 'though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool,' if you persist in unbelief, you are without excuse; you make me a liar, when I have humbled myself to establish my truthfulness by an all-sufficient reason; and in thus sinning against your

own soul, it is not because the light does not shine, but because you shut your eyes and refuse to see."

But, in effect, God in the Scriptures, not only offers His word as a pledge of His readiness to forgive, and points to His crucified Son, as a rock upon which the justice and truthfulness of His grace are built, but He continues His reasonings with the convicted and unbelieving sinner in the same strain, by reminding him *who and what the Redeemer is*. "Remember," saith God, "that my own nature is personally connected with that man, who is set forth before you in the Gospel as suspended on the cross. What object can be conceived as sufficient to account for such a humiliation of the nature of God, unless it be the satisfaction of a divine claim? What claim of the kind can be set up, unless it be that which is said in the Gospel to have been thus met? I have made Him to be sin for you, that you in Him might fulfil all the demands of my righteousness. All your iniquities were made to meet on Him; He bore them in His own body on the tree. I point to the crucified body of my only begotten Son, not merely then, as a vindication of the free forgiveness of sin; but I appeal to you, if the free forgiveness of sin is not the only reason which could have led the Son of God to endure this accursed death. When, therefore, I stand on Calvary, and proclaim to all, to you, 'though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool,'—the sacrifice which has been offered proves my sincerity and earnestness; and all hesitancy and doubt about unreserved acceptance of my mercy are unfounded and vain."

But, finally, God urges as a reason for his full and free forgiveness of scarlet and crimson sins, *His desire and purpose to promote in this way, His own glory.* “I admit,” saith God, “in accordance with my own word, that I love the world, and gave my only begotten Son for it, that it might not perish. But there is a higher and further end which led me to consent to this sacrifice, and which prompted me to make and govern the worlds; ‘I have made all things for myself;’ ‘I have created, especially all who are to be of the redeemed house of Israel, for my glory;’ ‘they shall show forth my praise.’ When I was blessed alone in eternity, it was deemed due unto myself, to create and people the worlds, that I might show them myself. This has been done to the utmost, by exhibiting each one of my blessed attributes in the highest possible degree. My holiness and my love, are witnessed by the blessed spirits around my throne in heaven; who cry day and night, ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory.’ My justice is displayed in hell, where the fallen are reserved in chains under darkness to the judgment of the great day. My incomprehensibility is manifest in every place and act and thing; so as to excite the universal exclamation: ‘O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!’

“But all my blessed attributes, as they previously shined, have been eclipsed in the execution of my plan for the redemption of man; and in addition, a property of my nature, which had hitherto been

hidden, incomparably more attractive than all my other perfections, was here so conspicuously revealed, that my holy and elect angels turn away their eyes from every other object, and desire to look into these things." This was the grace and mercy of the just God shown to the rebellious. The effects of this they delight to promote and praise. "They leave my upper courts, and descend to this lower world, that they may sing, 'Peace on earth, and good-will to men, Glory to God in the highest.'

"This it was, which caused the soul of my beloved one to be troubled. It was, that my name might be glorified. This it is, which prompts me in the Gospel to point you to the Lamb of God which taketh away sin. Should you look unto Him and be saved, my glory will be more exalted, than if you had never fallen, and I had blessed you in your holiness through unending ages. You will be forever a living monument of my wisdom, power, and grace. I will carry you into my fold rejoicing; and there will be joy, in the presence of the angels of God, over your repenting soul. Wherefore wonder not, and perish; but believe my assurance, 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'

Such then, beloved friends, are the reasons which God urges to gain your confidence, in the assurance of His grace. Surely, they are sufficient to convince you, that your sins cannot exceed His mercy; that He is ready to fulfil His promise in our text; and that although other sins merit everlasting death, yet that unbelief in God's free grace is the only sin, which can

damn you, and every other sinner in Christian lands. Is it not evidently too, the crowning sin? "If I had not come, and spoken unto them," said Jesus, "they had not had sin." It is said of one,\* who subsequently wrote a treatise on Sanctification, which cannot be appreciated except by advanced Christians, that, when he came first under the conviction of his sins, he could attain no peace, although he consulted many ministers of Christ. All their Scriptural expositions and assurances of God's readiness to forgive, afforded no relief; as he insisted that his sins transcended all. At length he came to a distinguished man of God,† who requested him to go over the catalogue of his sins, which he thought were unpardonable. When he had completed this, and had presented indeed a black and formidable list; the only reply which he received was, "You have forgotten the worst of all." "What is that?" said the self-condemning inquirer. The answer was, "Unbelief in Jesus Christ." The timely reproof was felt and savingly applied. He mixed faith with Jesus, as He is set forth in the Gospel; and immediately "accepted in the beloved," he went on his way rejoicing.

So, too, convicted and despairing soul, if you would be persuaded of the falseness and sinfulness of all the reasons for your unbelief; if you would cast an eye of faith upon Jesus, as the Lamb which was sacrificed in your stead, you would realize God's promise; "though your sins were as scarlet, they should be as white as snow; though they were red like crimson, they should be as wool."

\* Marshall.

† Thomas Goodwin.

## SERMON II.

## SOVEREIGN AND EFFECTUAL GRACE.

1 Cor. iv. 7.

“WHO MAKETH THEE TO DIFFER FROM ANOTHER? AND WHAT HAST THOU THAT THOU DIDST NOT RECEIVE? NOW, IF THOU DIDST RECEIVE IT, WHY DOST THOU GLORY AS IF THOU HADST NOT RECEIVED IT?”

THE special occasion which gave rise to these questions was this: In that carnal state of feeling, which was prevalent in the Corinthian Church, the gifts and graces of the various apostles and ministers were injuriously compared and lauded. Partisan cliques were thus formed; one boasting it was of Paul, while another professed to follow Apollos, and a third regarded Cephas as its head. It was the object of our apostle to denounce this man-exalting, and God-dishonoring spirit; and to induce his fellow-disciples to look upon the ministry from which they had derived any spiritual benefit, as simply the channel through which sovereign grace had chosen to flow into their souls. “Who, then,” he asks, “is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So, then, neither is that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.”

The different styles of preaching, therefore, by which Paul and his faithful brethren were characterized, and the different degrees of success with which their several ministries were crowned, were alike the gifts of God ; and it was the duty and privilege of every believer to regard these matters in this light. The blessed consequences which would result from such an estimate of the effectual character of God's agency, and of the mere instrumentality of men, were obvious. By what a self-emptied spirit would every minister then be possessed, regarding every talent with which he was endued as a mere gift of God to be employed for the glory of the giver ; contented with that share of power which had been entrusted to his charge, be it large or small ; exercising it gladly in that sphere to which Providence had assigned him, be it conspicuous or obscure, and more or less confined ; and hopefully looking forward to that day which shall try every man's work of what sort it is, and in which God shall crown not our merits, but his own gifts. While the ministry, moreover, would be thus distinguished by poverty of spirit, the people would be proportionately blessed. They would not be limited to any particular human source, nor confined in the benefit which they derived from it to their own, or any other creature's, wit ; but God would be the inexhaustible fountain, from which all human and creature ministries would be streams conveying rich blessings to their souls. "Therefore," saith the apostle, "let no man glory in men. For all things are yours ; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or

things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

We thus see, what the apostle intimates in our immediate context, that it was no particular and temporary circumstance which he was here adjusting, but a paramount and general principle, to be applied in every age. "These things, brethren," saith he, "I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another." And, then, he confirms all his reasonings and conclusions by a personal appeal in our text to their own experience, to their own conscious indebtedness to the distinguishing grace of God for all that they were and all that they possessed; saying, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?"

It was, then, a most authorized application of this Scripture which Augustine frequently made in his controversy with Pelagius, and by which he showed what our tenth article teaches, that "the condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God." With such abundant success, moreover, was this champion of the truth crowned, that no one in the nominal Church of Christ is even yet willing to be known as occupying the ground originally assumed by the ancient heretic whom he opposed—the name of Pelagian is universally cast out as

a bye-word and reproach, and the advocates of the sufficiency of unassisted human nature are not allowed to present any claims to Christian orthodoxy. But the root of the error obviously lay in that pride which is the characteristic of fallen men, common alike to the most ignorant and debased as well as to the most learned and exalted; and the controversy of a single age, however memorable, could not eradicate this. It might be thus forced to change its name and phase, but it would be only to spring up in a new and more plausible shape. Nothing but a thorough humbling, an absolute change, of the nature of man, can bring him to rely upon the distinguishing and sovereign grace of that God whom he distrusts. Under one pretext or another, in avowed defence of some important and acknowledged truth, and with certain evangelical assumptions, the old error might be expected to reappear. Accordingly, to go no further back, soon after the Reformation, the advocates of every man's ability to believe in Christ and to serve God, were organized into a popular and growing party.—But then it was maintained that we were possessed of this power not by nature, for this we lost in the Fall, but by grace, secured to us through Christ, and in the promise which accompanied the curse, when our first parents were shut out of the garden of Eden. The doctrine, thus modified, traced, you perceive, its origin to the Gospel, and did it apparent reverence; while, at the same time, it offered a plausible defence to God's justice, in requiring obedience of man, and also afforded tenable ground for maintaining the responsibility of man for whatever he omitted of what

was right, or committed of what was wrong. But in this humanly-devised theory, what room is left for the sovereignty of God—a truth fundamental in its nature, and, when rightly understood, so essential to the glory of the King of Heaven and to the blessedness of every godly creature—a truth so universally and unqualifiedly taught in the word of revelation? If every man possess a grace which he may use so as to ensure his salvation, and if he be left in the use of that grace to himself, or to the appliances of those means which are common to all, then when any one becomes united to Christ and endued with a saving hope, what force would there be in inquiring of him, “Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?” Under whatever plea such a doctrine be advanced, and whether or not it be supposed necessary to defend the justice of God and the responsibility of man, it applies the axe to the root of the divine sovereignty. It ascribes the difference between the believer and the unbeliever to the use by the first, and the disuse by the last, of a power which they both in common have. God is thus dethroned, ground for human glorying is discovered, and the inspired apostle is proved to be a false teacher. Besides, what grace is there in the bestowment of a power upon us, with which we must necessarily be endued if God would lay any claim to justice? what grace is there in salvation, when we attain salvation by the use of a power which we must possess, if God would hold us responsible? Salvation, in such a view of it, is no longer of

grace, but of debt. Again, what fallen human sinner ever found acceptance with God, or obtained any divine favor, who did not approach the majesty of heaven with a spirit which acknowledged that the blessing might be forever withheld, and that no prayer which he could offer by any strength imparted to all who are born under a gracious economy, would ever procure a hearing? Oh! brethren, Arminianism is only Pelagianism modified, evangelized, and rendered more dangerous, because it is equally poisonous, while it is gilded.

An Arminian in heart is allowed, in the guise of the Gospel, to sit in peace upon the throne of God, from which he would have been hurled as a usurper if he had ascended it as an avowed Pelagian. This has been extensively seen and felt, and the necessity therefore arose for another modification of the old error; and in our own day a party has accordingly been organized under the name of the New School.

These honestly acknowledge that the power to believe and to obey God, which the Arminians claim has been conferred by grace upon every fallen child of Adam, can in no proper sense be regarded as a gift of grace; but then they boldly maintain the old Pelagian error, that every man has this power by nature, and that, by the very constitution of his moral being, it can never be alienated from him, but must remain his throughout eternity. But, then, they have engrafted on this Pelagian stock, as a shoot, the semblance of an evangelical idea, in teaching that no man ever exercises this power unless he is induced to do so by the sovereign Spirit of God. But this mixture

of man's invention with God's revelation works badly. The Pelagian part of it is based on many fundamental errors, and leads to the saddest consequences. By all who hold it, the evil effects of the Fall must be considered as much slighter than they really are, and the actual relations in which, as the children of Adam, we stand to God, must, in the creeds of such persons, be essentially modified. There is no room left in the conceptions of such, for an appreciation of that infinite and everlasting curse of God, affecting every feeling and faculty of its objects, and resting upon every partaker of the fallen human nature as such; and which, as God imposed, none but He, by a sovereign act, can remove. The main efforts in conversion of those who adopt this new error, are directed to the arousing into action of a power in man which does not exist, and their appeals to this end are of a philosophical and human, and not of an evangelical character. Man is most generally, if not exclusively, directed to stir up himself, instead of his eye being directed to Christ, that he may be endued with the divine strength of the Holy Spirit: for why should he be looking for foreign assistance, when he has an adequate power, native and inward? and the result is, that the only conversion which the disciples of such teachers are apt to have, is that which they give themselves in the exercise of their own powers; they purpose to lead a new and holy life, and only become in many respects reformed. Notwithstanding their qualified admission in theory of the necessity of divine assistance, practically, each makes himself to differ from another, and glories as if he had not (and alas! it is

but too evident in many cases that he has not) received it.

With what different views our inspired apostle regarded the matter of his own spiritual necessity by nature, and of his indebtedness to unhelped sovereign grace, is obvious from the text, and might be almost indefinitely shown by such passages as these: "God," saith he, "who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved;) . . . for by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." "So, then," concludeth he in another place, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy;" and again, "By the grace of God I am what I am." In what perfect accordance with these acknowledgments and teachings of the great apostle is that confession of one of our Protestant English Reformers—now become universally standard and current in the Church—who, as he saw a convict driven in a cart, with a halter round his neck, to the place of execution, exclaimed: "There goes John Bradford, if it were not for the grace of God." Oh! brethren, when the film which is over our natural eye has been in like manner removed by the Great Physician, and our vision becomes equally clear—how startling is our first insight into the spiritual world! and with what fear and trembling do we proceed! We see the reins, which restrain the madness that is in every natural heart, in the hands of God! We account for that wickedness of a fellow-man, which is to be punished by the judge, by the loosen-

ing of the divine reins in his case, and for that moral life in another, which is the praise and envy of society, by the tightening of the same! Whenever the sword of the powers that be is unsheathed against a culprit, we behold in it a providence, by which God shows what fallen men naturally are, by which He points out an instance of what all would do, and to what all would be brought, if they were unrestrained! In every such case, the Christian becomes the executioner, because he sides with the holy and just King of Heaven against those whose fallen nature is his own! he does it with the momentous conviction in his breast, that if that divine Spirit who has hitherto restrained and sanctified him be withdrawn, the rope which he, as an officer of justice, now draws, may soon be in another's hands, while, like the lifeless culprit before him and for a similar offence, his own body is suspended as a spectacle in that place of blood!

These, indeed, are radical truths, and deeply offensive to the carnal mind. Many are the objections urged against them; and strong the fears which are entertained of their tendency. The moralist, the philanthropist, and statesman are ready to exclaim: "Of what use, then, is it to inculcate the lessons of virtue, and to promise rewards, and to threaten punishments?" To this we reply, that teaching men their duty, and the use of promises and threats, are part of the outward means which God employs to restrain His fallen creatures from wrong and to lead them in the right way; but that the success or failure of these means depends upon His giving or withholding His unseen and spirit-

ual help. But, again, it is asked, "What room is left, on the supposition of these views, for the accountability of man?" To this we answer, That the judicial sentence by which the partakers of our fallen nature were justly doomed to be the slaves of sin, by no means relieved them from responsibility for those sins which they might commit under it. The curse was brought upon our nature by itself. But, again, it may be inquired: "Is there not danger that these doctrines may induce the wicked to throw off all restraint; to account for their own crimes by their lack of a divine check; and to offer an unanswerable plea for their own impunity to those who may be tempted like themselves?" But we would rejoin, he sees not far, he has but a poor defence, who trusts in moral suasion or in human force, and who does not place his confidence against outbursts of violence from men in that God of our salvation, who stilleth the tumult of the people. Nor can the alleged plea of those who do wickedly, be allowed in arrest of judgment by us, who profess to be the officers of God, appointed to punish those who are left to develope in action the principles of that fallen and cursed nature which we all in common have.

But the point, which more immediately concerns us, is to show, How such views of the supreme and overshadowing control of the divine power are consistent with any attempts or efforts to make and perpetuate our peace with God. To this we answer, that St. Paul, who exalted grace to its due pre-eminence, experienced no difficulty here.\* On the contrary, he derived encouragement for exerting our-

selves to the utmost, and that, too, in the right and proper spirit, from the fact that we were wholly dependent upon divine strength. "Work out," saith he, "your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Nor is this reasoning of the inspired pen, in the least illogical. A perception and consciousness of the truth that God must work in us if any thing is to be wrought effectually for our salvation, are well calculated to urge us to the most strenuous exertions, and that, too, in the only proper frame of mind: to make us work with fear and trembling. God works not in us mechanically, as steam moves the different parts of an engine. If He did, then, we might well wait for an impulse which would compel and drag our souls. But our Maker, when He influences us, violates none of the laws of that moral constitution with which He originally endued us. He works in perfect accordance with them. It is not easy, even if it be possible, always to distinguish between the effects of the operations of God's Spirit within us, and the workings of our own minds or the emotions of our own hearts. More particularly, is it difficult to separate between the first steps of that operation by which the Spirit of God is about to translate a soul out of nature's darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel, and the feelings and conduct of many who yet live and die in their sins. So far as the powers of man are competent to describe, the experiences of many who come short and of others who enter the kingdom of heaven are, up to a certain point, precisely similar. Could the convictions of sin

be apparently deeper, or the cries for mercy more heart-rending, than are often felt and uttered by those who yet ultimately cast off all fear, and restrain prayer before God? Are not those, who are proved by the result to be of such as God hath chosen for Himself, and whom the Spirit has begun to lead to Christ, often left in exactly the same distressing situation for a long period? Sometimes they are on the very verge of despair. So far from being conscious that they possess divine help and are under divine guidance, they fear that they are deserted for ever by God, and that their day of grace is spent. They are led by weeping and supplications. When they attain the gift of faith, and become the accepted children of God in Christ Jesus—when they are made by the Spirit of God to differ from their former selves, and from their still impenitent and unbelieving fellow-men,—then they are taught by revelation, and by a consciousness of their natural aversion from those things which they so earnestly sought, to recognize and appreciate the presence and operation of the Holy Ghost even in that bitter experience, on account of which they feared that His help had been forever forfeited. Then they perceive that their first feeling of spiritual necessity, their first desire for that salvation which Jesus affords, the first petition for pardon which they offered, and every step up to and including that act of faith in their redeeming Lord, by which they were justified and introduced into the family of God—all proceeded from a divine source. Then they testify with Paul: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by

the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Such, then, are the blessed effects of the Scriptural doctrine of divine agency in all that is preliminary to the union of the soul by faith to Christ.

Does not this doctrine, therefore, when properly understood and not wilfully perverted, lead every impenitent man to cultivate all the aspirations for pardon and salvation that he feels—lest, in shaking them off, for aught he knows, he may be endeavoring to resist the special grace of God, and is certainly enhancing his own guilt, and fitting himself for a deeper destruction? Every anxious inquirer, whose mind is rightly instructed on the point before us, must be induced to persevere in his efforts to find Christ, by the very hope, that all his inward and outward wrestlings with God for the blessing, originated with, and are strengthened by Him, who alone maketh any fallen man to differ, in essential and saving points, from another. Moreover, in all the subsequent experience of the Christian man, what but the happiest consequences legitimately flow from the fullest reception and acting upon the doctrine, that if he is to make any comparative progress in his spiritual course, it must be God who shall make him to differ? Is poverty of spirit a blessed grace? But this can only consist with a thorough consciousness on our part, that we are our own worst enemies, and that all the strength which we have is to our own injury.

We are thus led to fear and tremble, to run from under our own shelter, and to find our covert under the Almighty's wings. Nor can any who enjoy such close and gracious protection from God, be indifferent

to the will of their divine shield; they cannot but have a zeal for God; they will be ready to do his every bidding; they cannot choose but work, in accordance with every impulse which grace excites: nor is it possible for them to work languidly and despairingly; the consciousness that God is their helper, will inspire them with courage; in every conflict, they will be certain of success, because He that is for them is more than all that are against them.

With what an assurance of final perseverance must they be blessed, who possess the spirit with which the questions in our text were conceived and penned! In that image of God, which has been reproduced in their souls, they recognize the workmanship of their heavenly Father. It is a gift from Him whose gifts are without repentance. The work by which they were made to differ from others, was done by God, and they know it must be for ever: He who began it in them, will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ. With what dependence upon, with what gratitude to God, will breasts like these be characterized and swayed! The language of their heart will ever be, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence;" and "Not unto us, O Lord! not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake." Oh! brethren in Christ, if you covet for yourselves, in all their fulness, the graces and joys of the redeemed—if you would feel and exhibit the charity which fallen fellow-men may well expect at your hands—if you would not lessen or decry the debt under which you are laid by the love and mercy of your God, in no sentiment or act of your lives give

any occasion to be remonstrated with in the words of our text: "Who maketh thee to differ from another? or what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?"

But, finally, is there any one now present who despises those blessings which the distinguishing grace of God confers—who ignores the way in which it has been explained to him that the Spirit of God works in a fallen soul, and who bases the defence of his inaction or opposition on the fact that God only can make him to differ from what he is by nature—determining, therefore, to wait until he is brought by God to a better mind, or fearlessly inquiring, "Why, then, doth God yet find fault?" "Who art thou, oh! man," says our apostle to such a one, "that repliest against God?" and we would add, your reasonings and conclusions may seem to be authorized to carnal minds, but, in the view of those who know better, your triumphant notes and taunts are as foolish as the inferences of a maniac; they sound in the ears of such like the ravings of one void of spiritual reason—like the prelude in time of an actual and fearful tragedy in eternity, when the despiser on earth has become the companion of the devil and his angels in hell. If, then, you have any desire that God should make you to differ from what you are and what you will be, unless your nature be changed, you must repent of that wicked and ungodly stand which you have assumed, in determining to wait until you are sensibly forced; you must be brought to work, and yet give God the whole

glory of your working; you must take up your position at the foot of Jesus' cross, looking and crying for mercy. It is only they who are brought by convicting grace to this humble posture and act, whom converting grace ever makes to differ. Unless you are led thus and there by God, you will never become a monument of His distinguishing and sovereign grace.

## SERMON III.

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### THE LAMENTATION OF THE LOST OVER THEIR OWN NEGLECT.

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Jer. viii. 20.

“THE HARVEST IS PAST, THE SUMMER IS ENDED, AND WE ARE NOT  
SAVED.”

SCARCELY any greater calamity could befall a people in a climate such as this, than the setting in of winter, with no provision in our barns. Long ere the recurrence of seed-time, the horrors of famine and starvation would be experienced, and the land would become a depopulated waste. Deep, and loud, and long, and universal would be the cry from the inhabitants. On every side the heart-rending lamentation would be heard: “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” If, in addition, a people over whom such a doom impended could reproach themselves with past neglect, with what bitterness would it envenom their despair! As they looked upon the leafless forest and shrubbery—or the unyielding frozen ground, or the mantle of sleet and snow with which the face of the earth was covered—as they heard the howling and pitiless blast, and contrasted all this with those genial seasons, in which “the earth put forth of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the

full corn in the ear;" in which they might have sown their seed and gathered in the increase of the fields—how would that pleasure or idleness appear, on account of which they had foregone the opportunity of providing for their present wants! what poignancy would it add to the wailing: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!"

Is it not, then, a most terrific simile which the prophet uses in our text, to depict the evil with which he was directed to threaten his rebellious countrymen? God was meditating the most summary judgments in their case, on account of their incorrigible wickedness. Ere, however, the punishment was inflicted, Jeremiah was commissioned to announce the gathering storm of divine vengeance. Most faithfully did the prophet strive to rouse the fears of his fellow-subjects, and to lead them to that repentance which God required at their hands. The calamity which threatened his native land was not second in his estimation to any that could befall it. Even the devastation of famine would not have exceeded. As the prophet perceives in vision his countrymen led captive by the Chaldeans to their distant land—as he foresees them sitting down and weeping by the rivers of Babylon, he warns them, that the grief and despair with which their hearts will then be filled, can be likened only to the hopeless wretchedness of a people without food, and who, on the eve of a winter, against the length and severity of which they were unprovided, should exclaim: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Those opportunities of pardon, those offers of mercy which

they now so recklessly neglected, would then be regarded as the very harvest and summer of their lives; and utterly disconsolate, they would give up the remainder of their time to overwhelming self-reproach.

Beloved brethren, the dealings of the Lord with that generation of the Jews were no doubt important; but they would never have been recorded on the sacred page, unless they were intended as a lesson for each succeeding age. The principle which they involve is of universal application. Whatever may be the nature of the calamities which befall us—if they have been brought upon us by ourselves, or might have been avoided by timely attention—their endurance will be doubly severe; and ere they overtake us, our text should be viewed in the light of a fearful and momentous warning. There is, however, one case with which Scripture figures specially associate the threatening before us. We refer to that eventful epoch in every man's history, when his probation is closed—when those offers of mercy through the blood of Jesus Christ which have been rejected are withdrawn, and the sinner hears the Almighty Judge pronounce his irreversible doom—he sees the door of grace closed—he feels not only the anguish of desperation, but of remorse, as he remembers the spiritual privileges that have been abused, and he takes up the lamentation: “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved.” Let us, then, beloved hearers, look at the fearful comparison which the text suggests, and be urged by it to secure salvation while we can.

There are only two points which will claim our attention. The first is, that *the present life, if Scrip-*

*turally viewed, must be regarded as the set harvest-time of souls.* Some, perhaps, may be disposed to question this, and to ask, If there be not a peculiar fitness in the end of the world being considered as the spiritual harvest of God? In proof of which it may be urged, that the followers of Christ will then be separated from the impenitent and unbelieving and gathered into the granary of heaven, and that, moreover, the matter is so presented by our Lord in the familiar parable of the tares and wheat. There we are taught, that until the end of the world, saints and sinners will live promiscuously together; but that God will then separate between the two, and while He takes to himself the first, as the wheat in harvest time is set apart for use, He will cast out the last, as the husbandman throws away the tares, which serve no good end, and which have injured the beauty and productiveness of his field. The force of this is freely admitted. The last day will emphatically prove a harvest in the spiritual world. Still, brethren, there is another aspect of the matter in which the present life is even a more important harvest than the judgment. It is true, that the consequences of the judgment will be momentous—yet that whole transaction, solemn and glorious as it shall be, will only be the public disclosure and ratification of what has already taken place. It will not be the day of trial; it will be simply sentence-day. The trial will have occurred during the lives of those then gathered round the bar of God. These souls will have been fitted for heaven or hell during their sojourn on the earth. All, who on the last day shall be publicly acknowledged by

God and received to dwell with Him forever, must have been, while they lived on earth, secretly owned as His, and admitted into close and blessed communion with Himself. Thus, the final harvest will be only the sum total of all the harvests, which have been reaped from successive generations on the earth. It was in accordance with this, that our Saviour impressed upon His disciples the great fact, that the present life was the harvest of souls. "Say not ye," said our Lord by the well of Samaria to the twelve, when they wondered at the interest which He had displayed in leading the woman, who had just left them, to the saving knowledge of the truth, "that there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest." At the time when He spake these words, this was probably true in the natural world; but those spiritual fields, in which He had called the disciples to labor, He declares, were "already white to the harvest." Our Saviour thus likened the souls, who were perishing around, to grain ready for the sickle in the field, and yet, from lack of reapers, suffered to decay. By this comparison, He justified the earnest and unremitting character of His own labors, and urged them to imitate His example.

Upon another occasion, too, our Redeemer regretted that the laborers were so few, while the harvest was so great, and directed His people to pray "to the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth laborers into His harvest." It is, then, a Scriptural illustration of this world, when it is represented as the harvest-field of souls. But it will be further seen, how apt and forcible this illustration is, if we remind

ourselves of two important truths. The first is, *There is no period of the present life in which the salvation of the soul cannot be secured.*

Youth is often spoken of as the seed-time; and hence it is but natural to regard old age as the period of reaping and gathering. This, however, refers chiefly to temporal interests and prospects. It is an undoubted truth, that the character which we form and gain in our earlier days, abides with us, for the most part, to the close of life. So that old age is but the developed germ of youth. There is, too, a momentary sense in which it is true, that even in spiritual and eternal things, the period of youth, so generally misspent and so frequently regarded as only fit for indulgence and pleasure, is yet the time to sow; and that as a man then sows, so will he reap, in this respect, for the remainder of his life, and throughout his endless being in the world to come. Beyond the period of youth, conversions from the ways of sin are comparatively rare; and hence the importance of seeking the Lord early, when He is generally found. But if the middle-aged and the old are seldom brought within the fold of Christ, it is because sinful habits have gained overpowering dominion in the soul, or because God has been provoked, on account of their joining themselves to their idols, to let them alone. It is not because salvation is impossible in their case. For among their ranks instances of conversion do occur; and such are not excluded from the offers of mercy in God's word. So long as we are continued in this world, redeemed by the blood of Christ, there is no period in which, if we forsake our wicked ways and

unrighteous thoughts, and turn unto the Lord, He will not have mercy upon us. From early infancy to advanced life, there is no instant in which the heart cannot be changed, and the forgiveness of sins obtained. The gates of gospel grace stand open night and day. It is perpetually in this life the harvest-time of souls. In a most important aspect of the case, no time for preparation is required to secure our peace with God. There is thus no season assigned to sowing—no time needed for growing and maturing. It is a time of unceasing harvest. Every hour we reap, or refuse to put in the sickle. Upon each moment, salvation or perdition is suspended. There is no instant of our lives in which we do not accept or reject the offers of God's grace. With what interest and value, therefore, does this scriptural view of the case invest the whole progress of our pilgrimage through this world! At every step, the invitation is addressed to us by Jesus: "Come unto Me." There is no period in which the declaration does not sound in our ears: "Behold, now is the accepted time; and behold, now is the day of salvation." Surely, when we thus remember that God's full and everlasting favor may be gained at any moment—that we may, every day and hour, be fitted by His grace to be gathered with His sheaves in the last day, it shows an aptness, it gives a force to that scriptural illustration by which this life is represented as the harvest-time of souls.

But this will also appear, if we consider that *there is not a single instant of our lives in which the means of grace may not produce their saving*

*effect.* Oh! what a mistaken view of the Gospel is that which assigns, under the use of the means of grace, some definite or indefinite length of time, as necessary to produce a saving change in our hearts. Does not even nature itself teach us, that there must be some line which separates the children of the kingdom from the children of the wicked one? some line on our birth-side, of which we are exposed to the wrath of God, but on the gracious side of which we are accepted and safe? The change, therefore, by which we are translated out of Satan's darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, is always and necessarily an instantaneous one. God's ways of dealing with the souls that He is leading to Himself, may indeed be diverse. Some He may and does sensibly and almost visibly change from open rebels into penitent, believing, and obedient children. These may be able, with a good degree of certainty, to name the time and place in which they first became partakers of God's grace. Others, again, may be allowed to resist for a time the drawings of God's Spirit; they may be gradually and insensibly brought to the saving knowledge of Christ. They may not only be unable to point out the period of their conversion, but be in doubt whether as yet their sins are forgiven. But in these and all other cases, it was true, whether the subjects of the change be themselves aware of it or not, that there was a precise time in which they were admitted into the family of God, and became parties to His everlasting covenant of grace.

This view of conversion, moreover, corresponds with those numerous instances of this spiritual change which

are described in Holy Writ. The immediate disciples of our Lord, at the mere bidding of our Saviour, left all straightway, and followed Him. The three thousand, at the first Christian Pentecost, were convicted, converted; and baptized on the same day. The Philippian jailer was instructed in the word of the Lord, believed it, and made a profession of his faith, all on the same night. The Ethiopian treasurer was a subject of the same blessed change in as short a period of time. And any other view of this matter results from spiritual ignorance and pride. It springs from our not understanding the nature of the operations of God's Spirit in any case of the new birth, and from not being convinced that by His sovereign and mighty power, He is able to transform us from our natural characters into His own holy image; it is caused by our proud desire to aid God in this work, and to prepare ourselves for the reception of His grace. An humble and scriptural view of this subject, however, will teach us to regard the work of God's Spirit like the blowing of the wind, the sound of which we hear, but we cannot tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth. When born of the Spirit, we are the subjects of His single and unmixed operation of an instantaneous change. In the use of whatever means of grace the change occurs, it transpires in a moment of time. If in prayer, the heart is brought to act with faith on Christ, and to go out in love to God: if it be in hearing the preached, or reading the written word, we are led to accept some invitation, or to believe some declaration, which at once unites us to Christ, and insures our acceptance with God: if it be under some Provi-

dential affliction or deliverance, the soul is made immediately to exercise a saving trust in the mercy of its God in Christ. Thus the means of grace, whenever they are endued with power by God's Spirit, are competent, at any moment, to effect conversion in the heart, and to confer salvation upon the soul. Whenever they are thus used, they are the putting in of the sickle into the ripe grain. In the connection now before us, they must not be regarded as the sowing and dressing of the field, waiting a necessary and appointed time for the bearing of fruit. It is always harvest-time. In the use of all God's ordinances, the sickle is employed. By them, souls are reaped and gathered into God's barn on earth, awaiting the set time for their removal to the granary in heaven; or the stalk proves too thick and stubborn—it yields not to the scythe, and remains exposed to sudden destruction or gradual decay.

With what importance, brethren, does this Scriptural view of our condition invest each and every one of the appointed means of grace—every proclamation of the Gospel—every occasion on which the word of Christ is preached or heard. Truly, the present life is an unceasing and invaluable harvest—the harvest of perishing and immortal souls!

But this leads us briefly to consider our second and last point; which is this: *If we neglect to reap in this harvest, with what despair and remorse shall we be filled when it is for ever past!* Into what a state of *hopeless wretchedness* shall we sink, when we are placed in such a condition as this; if we shall ever become deeply and thoroughly conscious that no offer of mercy shall

ever again reach us—that there is for us no hope of pardon, “but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation” from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power? The mere dreaming of such a calamity, the imagining in sleep, that we found ourselves, upon the last day, on the left hand of Christ, has caused many a one to awake in terror, which it has proved for a length of time impossible to shake off. But who can picture the actual reality? the emotions which will possess the lost soul, amid the terrific glories of the judgment day! when those fears, with which it had sometimes looked forward to that eventful day, but which it had shaken off under the delusive hope of being prepared in time, are, to its overwhelming disappointment and woe, realized! what feelings will the unrelenting features of the Judge, the stern countenance of an incarnate God, excite, when He bids the soul, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!” Who, under such a doom, will be able to contemplate what he has lost—what he has incurred! from whom he is for ever separated—with whom he is for ever to dwell! In what a frenzy of excitement and desperation, as Jesus and His redeemed enter into their rest, and shut to the door; will he rise from without and knock, saying, “Lord, Lord, open unto us!” And when Jesus from within shall say: “Verily, I say unto you I know you not”—when He sendeth His angels, and they gather this lost one, with all that are without, to cast them into that lake of fire which is the second death—when the soul finds its bed in hell, and feels the gnawings of that worm which dieth

not, Oh! tell me, will there not be, in this casting of the soul and body into hell, a deeper perdition than any which can be experienced on earth? Will there not be, in this second death, a bitterness which the prospect or endurance of the first death, in its worst possible shape, could never excite? Will not the despair which fills the soul whose spiritual harvest is past, be incomparably more terrific and intolerable than the lack of any and all of the necessaries of this life could inspire? Can any temporal sufferer fathom the depths of that anguish with which the lost soul in hell shall take up the lamentation, "The harvest is past; the summer is ended, and I am not saved?"

But not only will despair be felt, under the conviction that no future harvest will occur, but *the remembrance of that harvest and summer which were spent in sin or spiritual sloth, will harrow the soul with self-reproach.* The fact, that its whole life on earth had been one perpetual harvest—that neither time nor labor, except to overcome its own unwillingness, had been required to make its peace with God; that the assurance was given, that on God's part, all things were ready; that the invitation had been extended by Jesus, and never withdrawn, to "Come" unto him; that at every step, nothing but unwillingness to accept, nothing but aversion to the Saviour and his salvation hindered—this will make the soul regard its doom as spiritual suicide—cause it to look upon itself as its own worst enemy, and incite it to prey upon itself! How will every neglected and misimproved moment of its sojourn here, in which pardon and salvation might have been secured, and its eternal ruin have been

escaped, appear to have been fraught with everlasting interests, and be laid to its own account, as an infinite debt, and exacted at its insolvent hands!

But God's mercy, too, it will be remembered, vouchsafed moments of special favor-times, in which the means of grace were brought immediately to bear, and the offer of salvation directly made. In what light will the lost soul then view these auspicious, but still misimproved hours? How will you, fellow-sinner, look back upon such a season as the present, when you were forewarned of all that you will then be suffering? How, upon every occasion on which you have sat under the droppings of the sanctuary, and been brought by all the mercies of God in Christ, to make your calling and election sure—(how, upon such a series of services as those in which you have lately had the opportunity of joining?)—Oh! if from these means of grace you absented yourself for some vain worldly reason or excuse; or if, although present, the instructions, the reproofs, the entreaties of Christ's ambassadors, neither touched nor won your heart, how will you bear the remorse with which you will visit your own soul, after you have cast your eye back on these propitious seasons through which you have passed? When, too, you remember how often God prospered you in temporal things, and yet these tokens of His goodness and long-suffering led you not to repentance, but you still continued in hardness and impenitence of heart—when you remind yourself of some afflictive Providential stroke, which you should have regarded as coming from a kind chastising Father's hand, and gladly submitting yourself, should have allowed it to wean your

affections from the world, and fix them on the things above, but under which you hardened your neck and went on frowardly in your ways—when these come up before the mind, where will be your fortitude to bear the fury of God, and to drink the vials of His wrath? With what an unfathomable depth of anguish and remorse will you take up the unavailing and ceaseless lamentation: “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved!”

Oh! then, fellow-sinner, now, in the harvest of God’s mercy, secure his blessing, lest he set for you another harvest, and force you to reap and gather in his curse. Seek the Lord while he may be found—call upon him while he is near: lest that come upon you which is written, and the Lord fulfil his word by saying to your soul, “Because I have called and you refused; I have stretched out my hand and you would not regard; therefore also I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh!” Before, then, the Saviour be converted into the inflexible and inexorable judge, hear His kind and winning call. He cries to your soul, “Come unto me;” he encourages your hesitating steps with the assurance, “Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” “Come, for all things are now ready.” Say not, “Go thy way for this time; when a more convenient season cometh, I will call for thee; there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest;” “for lift up your eyes, and behold the fields are already white unto the harvest” of God’s everlasting blessings. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation!” Oh! that the children of this world were

as wise in spiritual as they are in earthly things! When was it that any were forced to take up the lamentation in our text, because they refused to sow and reap the grain of that bread which perisheth; but how many will wail, because they have neglected the harvest and summer of their souls! Oh! that you could be as wise in this thing as even the senseless birds of the air; that you would suffer the expostulation of the prophet in our chapter to persuade you to follow their example! For he saith: "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord."



## SERMON IV.

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### THE HID TREASURE.

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Matt. xiii. 44.

“THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE UNTO TREASURE HID IN A FIELD;  
THE WHICH, WHEN A MAN HATH FOUND, HE HIDETH, AND FOR JOY  
THEREOF GOETH AND SELLETH ALL THAT HE HATH, AND BUYETH  
THAT FIELD.”

THAT gracious system of means, which the King of heaven has devised and established upon the earth to reconcile human rebels unto himself, is divinely adapted to its every circumstance and purpose. Hence, when it is viewed from different positions, and is seen to be accomplishing various ends, it always presents itself in a new light. This abundantly appears from those seven very diversified parables which our chapter contains; yet they form only a single cluster from that rich vine which runs through the first three Gospels. In external appearance, these grapes of Canaan may be nearly the same, yet to the taste their flavors will be very unlike.

As there is an almost infinite variety in the situations and characters and attainments of God's creatures, so the spiritual instrumentality which their Maker and Saviour brings to bear upon them is equally diversified; and in those life-like pictures of

it which Jesus draws, will be found a corresponding difference. The truthfulness of these observations will be amply proved by a comparison of our text with the succeeding parable. No formal attempt, however, will now be made to institute such a comparison. Our present purpose will be answered by the simple remark, that the two parables are intended to illustrate the effect which the Gospel produces upon two characters, whose religious convictions were more or less deep.

That which now claims our attention, shows, as we apprehend, the aspect in which the salvation that is by the Gospel presents itself to the more advanced inquirer. It describes the way in which this all-important subject affects one whose mind is absorbed with it; who is deeply persuaded, that there is nothing in heaven or earth to be compared with a well-founded hope in Christ; and who is consequently prepared for any sacrifice or effort which may be required to attain it. Our Lord spake this and the two succeeding parables to His disciples in private. They were designed to prepare them for their subsequent office in the church, as preachers and rulers. Now, among their future hearers, there would frequently be some who had attained, or who fancied that they had arrived at, such a degree of concern about the things which made for their peace as has been described. Anxiety upon the subject would be awakened in the breasts of many by the earnest preaching which they would hear. Again, there would be the victims of earthly disappointment and bereavement, and in whom, consequently, desires would spring up for that treasure

which the world can neither give nor take away. Others, too, would learn their guilt, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and be ready to purchase deliverance from the oppressive burden at any price. Now, the hope which the Gospel held out to such, and the unceasing and earnest efforts which it would induce them to put forth, in order to lay hold upon it, the Saviour likened to "treasure hid in a field; the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."

Now, the question, which we propose to answer, is this: *What insight does this passage afford into the state and obligations of a soul, that is truly seeking an interest in Christ?* This parable illustrates, then, in the first place, that *despondency* with which inquirers for Christ are often overtaken.

Could anything be more disheartening to one, who was searching for a hidden treasure, than to be taken to a field, and as his guide covered its unbroken and extensive surface with the horizontal sweep of his arm, to be told that it lay buried there? At what spot his laborious effort should commence, such a one could not divine. Neither would he know how deep he would have to dig. Through how many years of toil he would be required to pass, remains to be proved. Perhaps even his life might be spent in a wearisome and fruitless search. Now, both experience and the Scriptures show, that this does not too strongly represent what the inquiring sinner often feels. When the unfailing faith of the captain of our salvation was tested by desertion, as he hung sus-

pended on the cross, even he cried out: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" Those, too, of his imperfect followers, who have trodden most closely in his footsteps, have had their trust tried in the same way. In a season of spiritual darkness, Job exclaims: "Oh! that I knew where I might find him." Isaiah, too, thus addresses the Most High, "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." Moreover, as a characteristic complaint of the Christian, when denied a comforting view of his Redeemer, St. Paul puts these words in his mouth: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?"

But if such suffering were endured by the Saviour and his saints, is it wonderful that they who have not as yet entered into covenant with God—who feel sin through the law working death within, and who have no hope of pardon and acceptance through Christ, should have their hearts wrung with unmixed anguish, as they ask for the first time, "What must we do to be saved?" They may be faithfully and scripturally directed to "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." But that cold, untrusting view of their great sin-bearer, which their understandings are able to take, affords them not the relief for which they seek. They cannot, of themselves, lay hold upon Christ, and cause him, as a living tenant, to take up his dwelling in their hearts by faith, and to become in them a vital hope of glory. They are tempted to turn away from that scene upon Calvary, so comfortless to unconverted fallen nature, and to begin to search

again through the whole field of Scriptures for that eternal life which is in Christ.

The sinner may even enter the visible church, and be a faithful observer of every outward service; yet he cannot find there that "wicket-gate," which will admit him to a close and saving walk with God. Though others may plainly perceive and point it out, yet he cannot see; and, while they are rejoicing, he sinks into "the slough of despond." He may resolve to give over further effort; and he might be glad to shake off every conviction of his spiritual wants. However absurd such a direction might be, he would consider it more rational and hopeful, if told to perform a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and literally to excavate the suburbs of the city, until he found the identical spot where Jesus lay, than to go to Christ whom he cannot see. For, as he hears, that the incarnate Son of God rose from the grave, he knows not to what part of his boundless creation he has taken himself; and the search for him appears as desperate, as if a blind man should attempt to find one who eluded him, by grasping at every object which came within his reach. The only eyes which he possesses are those of his body, or, at best, those of the understanding or imagination. He has no spiritual organ by which he can perceive and apprehend Christ; and, therefore, it is no help for him to be assured, that it is only the misconception of the natural heart which leads him to hope for any discovery of the body of his Lord.

It is no relief for him to be told, that "the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is,

to bring Christ down from above;) or who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." By such an explanation, the unbelieving sinner seems only to have his difficulties increased. For now he understands that the blind are commanded to see, and that work is expected from a man without hands. The case seems to him more hopeless than at first. He is ready to sit down with folded arms, at the very outskirts of the field in which he is told that the Gospel treasure is hid. For now he knows, that by no unaided exertions of his own can it be found.

But our parable teaches, in the second place, *what strenuous and untiring efforts are sometimes required of the needy sinner, before he finds that treasure which is hid in Christ.* Although nothing can be more presumptuous, and nothing will prove more unavailing, than an attempt to come to Christ, without the recognition of the necessity of being drawn to him by the Father, yet the injunction is express and urgent, that we should "strive to enter in at the strait gate." Although, too, it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but of his own mercy he saveth us," and the result of all our struggles is, that we are brought to give up dependence on our own arm in every sense, and to cast ourselves entirely upon the mercy and help of God;

yet, on this very account, are we directed to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." While, in his sovereignty, God sometimes confers salvation, to all appearance almost unsought, upon a few; yet, in other cases, He chooses to exact a patient, self-denying, and earnest use of all the means of grace. Thus, it is not at the first report that many sinners exercise faith in the glad tidings of salvation which they hear. Like the Bereans, they feel an impulse to resort to the Scriptures, and ascertain for themselves whether these things are so. Or the ministers of Christ, as they see, with their Master, what little effect they produce by word of mouth, urge their flock to "Search the Scriptures" and believe their testimony. Upon their diligent compliance with this direction, too, may be suspended their eternal safety.

Again, it is not a single proclamation of the Gospel that always begins and ends the work of grace in the heart; but the interest which one sermon excites may be subsequently effaced by an habitual or partial absence from the services of the sanctuary, or it may ripen into the absolute enjoyment of the love and favor of God, by a constant mingling in the assemblings and worship of the saints. There may be many a man who never would have been "blessed," if he had not earnestly and perseveringly heard Christ, "watching daily at His gates, waiting at the posts of His doors."

Once more, although the Father of mercies sometimes sees fit to call the grossest reprobates to the immediate knowledge of his grace in Christ, yet it is not seldom that He refuses to hold any communion

with an inquirer, unless he pursue another course ; unless he endeavor, to the full amount of the ability which God giveth, to cease from evil, and to learn to do well. Jesus imposes it upon such a one as a condition, first, to every practicable extent, to do the divine will ere he will allow him to know of the doctrine whether it is of God, or whether it is spoken, without authority, by man. Thus he is allowed, only by his faithfully following on, to know the Lord.

But, above all, how many a distressed inquirer is urged to cry out in *prayer* to God, if perhaps his sin may be forgiven him ! Whatever mercy may be vouchsafed others, who have hitherto “restrained prayer before God,” yet of such a one it is required, that he must cry after knowledge, and lift up his voice for understanding ; he must seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures, ere he understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. Prayer is emphatically *the* instrument with which most who are brought to the field in which the Gospel treasure lies hid, are expected to work. They must be so thoroughly convinced of their absolute poverty and wretchedness, unless they are endowed with the riches of Christ, that the feelings of beggars will possess them, and the importunate petitions of beggars be offered by them. They must assign no limit to their earnestness and perseverance. As miners, in their search for even the baser metals, penetrate the earth by their shafts for hundreds of feet, so those who dig for that which is “better than gold, yea than much fine gold,” must determine, if needs be, to break up the entire surface of the field, and to explore every

attainable depth, until they find that which their soul seeks. Like Jacob, with the angel of the covenant, they must give the Lord no rest from those prayers in which that spiritual strength which they put forth, can be illustrated by nothing except the desperate energies with which a man wrestles to maintain his own footing, and to throw his adversary down. Curse and perdition are, in the apprehensions of such souls, the only alternation of blessing and salvation. From them, "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence;" and they are "the violent who take it by force."

Yet it must never be forgotten, that while God insists upon many a convicted sinner thus inquiring of Him to deliver his wretched soul, yet the result of all this effort, if it eventuate in that which is permanently valuable or truly saving, always is to impress him with the unshaken confidence, that not unto him, not unto him, but unto God's name, be the glory for the mercy and the truth which have been shown him. Nay, they of whom such a laborious experience has been exacted, are generally more deeply imbued with the lesson of their own helplessness, and of the Almighty sovereignty of God's grace, than they who have received mercy as an almost unasked-for gift. The prominent effect of their severe exercises is to teach them their utter uselessness in themselves. Before the blessing is attained, the hollow of their thigh, like Jacob's, is by a simple touch of God's finger, disjointed, so that they cannot even stand of themselves. So far as all their feeling can testify, they are on the verge of failure and despair. Nay, their strength is spent; they, in the simple desire to break their fall, throw

themselves upon Him from whom they had perhaps unconsciously been endeavoring in vain to wrest the prize.

Instead, however, of rejection and ruin, they find, that what they had feared as damnation, proves at once the salvation of their souls. Instead of being thrown to the ground, and being left there in despair, they now hear the voice of Him who readily yields to trust what could not have been wrung from Him by strength. The Omnipotent Saviour, as if detained by the hands of the lost creature, cries out, "Let me go." Immediately the desponding sinner's weakness is made perfect in Christ's strength. He is encouraged to cry out: "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me;" and grace makes an everlasting covenant of peace with him to whom it freely gave prevailing power. The treasure, which was hid in the field, is found.

But, then, it generally is not discovered by such a one, when digging in a new spot. It is all at once seen under some clod which had been previously turned up. That hope of glory which springs from Christ within us, is suddenly and unexpectedly awakened, in answer to some thrice-offered prayer. That faith, which is accompanied by an inward witness, is excited by some trite truth or promise. The dead letter of the Gospel becomes quickening, and imparts life. This worker-out of his own salvation is thus undoubtingly convinced that it was God who worked in him. All merit in and dependence upon self, are for ever renounced; and he becomes by eminence, the one of whom it was predicted that he

should say: "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

But let us note, in the last place, *what effect such success has upon this seeker of spiritual treasure.* In our parable, it is observed, first, that he "hideth it." Whatever question moralists might here raise, as to the propriety of such a course in the person whose conduct is brought forward as an illustration, all will agree that it is but natural. Few there are, who would not make such a discovery of an earthly fortune, accrue exclusively to their own profit. But, without attempting to justify the act, it certainly serves to illustrate the point which our Lord had in hand; and the finder of spiritual treasure could not be blamed for following, in this respect, the footsteps of his type. For, while it is the privilege and duty of every one to whom Christ manifests himself, like Andrew and Philip, to bring others to their Lord; yet that life of God, to which we are introduced at our new birth, is essentially a secret thing—its existence and actings are within the soul. Communion with God is emphatically that "joy with which a stranger intermeddleth not." It may inwardly be carried on to the highest degree, when the lips do not move; and when even the lowest whisper of his own does not reach the outward ear of the favored guest, in the spiritual audience chamber of the King of kings.

Its most precious manifestations, too, of its vitality and activity within the inner man, are in that closet, where none is admitted but the worshipper and his God. That treasure which the man toiled so long in the field to find, he now carries in his heart. His soul

is enriched; and though stripped of all things else and immured within a dungeon, yet he possesses that with which he would not part for the world beside. His "life is hid with Christ in God." His walk upon the earth is by faith, in view of things unseen. His affections are set upon the things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Like one who hideth a discovered treasure, Christ is enjoyed in secret by those who find him.

But the last step which the man in our parable took, was, "*he sold all that he had and bought that field.*" So valuable, indeed, had been that treasure in his eyes, even before it was found, that the bare hope of gaining it prevented him from enjoying what he already possessed. He left all, and began to dig. It was, therefore, but a matter of course that upon its discovery he should part with every thing in order to secure it.

But here the question arises, in what way can such a purchase illustrate the bestowment of that "free-gift" of God, which is always "bought without money and without price?" It should be observed, then, that the simple finding of Christ, in the sense of the parable, is the actual appropriating him to our souls by faith, so that our interest in him can never be lost. It is the entering into that everlasting covenant with God, by which our sins are forgiven and eternal life is secured. So that the blessing is conferred, before what it may be pretended in this case was the price, could have been paid.

When Jesus savingly manifests himself to a soul, he finds it in a depressed condition, unable to enjoy

the things of this life. But this sorrow of the world, which worketh death, his gracious Spirit produced, that as a relief to its own gloom, it might be willing to seek that salvation to which it is naturally averse. The heart is still bound by the cords of affection to earthly objects, but it is rendered incapable of deriving any pleasure from them by that deep sense of its own spiritual necessity and wretchedness which has been awakened within. If these convictions could only be shaken off it would return to the place from whence it had come out. It is only when that feeling of spiritual want by which the convicted soul is distressed discovers a divine object upon which it can fasten, that then a new-found joy fills the soul, all creature ties are loosened and every idol is renounced. The new affection takes possession of the heart and expels the old. The distressed worldling, by the act of faith, enlists himself as a soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, as one that warreth, he frees himself from all "entanglements with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

So far, too, indeed, is this (subsequent) sale by the heart of all that it has, from being viewed as the purchase-money for eternal life, that it is regarded as a blessed part of that deliverance from this present evil world with which Christ makes us free; and the greater the extent to which we carry it the higher the degree of that salvation which is enjoyed. Although, then, the most earnest and untiring toil may be exacted of us before the hid Gospel treasure be found; and although the most unreserved earthly

sacrifices be subsequently required at our hands, yet it is neither by creature strength nor money, that the gift of God is purchased, but all these things God worketh in us by his grace, to his own praise and our salvation, that no flesh may glory in his presence. Nothing which we do or suffer can answer the purpose of merit at the bar of God. On the contrary, the saving discovery of Christ, consists in finding all the righteousness which we need, in Himself, and all the strength which we require in that Spirit whom He gives. Yet to those who see only with carnal eyes it seems as though the believer had purchased an inheritance in heaven by sacrificing all he had on earth; as though "for joy of that treasure which he found, he had gone and sold all that he had and bought that field."

And now, in application of the whole, we ask, Are there not many present who avow that they have the same estimate of the blessings of the Gospel, which the man in our parable had formed of the treasure in the field? If so, what opinion must be entertained of the sincerity of this profession, unless you diligently ply all the means of grace, as your representative before us exerted all his strength and skill, in digging up the ground? Affect not to regard the cases as essentially unlike. Jesus himself has drawn a parallel between the two. Although the blessing will ultimately be attained in such a manner as will show that it was discovered to, and conferred upon you, in a sovereign way, by God; yet he chooses, and may insist, even to the alternative of your eternal perdition, that you should seek for it with all your

heart. It may be the decree in your case, that "the kingdom of heaven," if entered at all by you, shall, in the eyes of all spectators, assume that appearance in which it is presented in our text. It must, at least, *seem* to suffer violence from you, and to be taken by force. Like Habakkuk, you may have to complain: "Oh! Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! Even cry unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!" May we not, then, come to you and say: "What meanest thou, oh! sleeper? Arise, and call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon you, that you perish not!" Why is your Bible so much neglected? Why are you present but half the time at the church? Why are the week-day services irregularly attended? Why is your besetting sin allowed such unresisted sway? Why does your closet witness such inconstant and lukewarm pressing of your suit before the Throne of Grace? Thus shall God, the Saviour, be found of you, when you seek Him with all your heart. In every appointed place and service, wait upon him; and "or ever you are aware," He will say unto your soul, "I am thy salvation," and endue you with the riches of his grace. Then, it will be your exalted privilege to show, by selling all you have—by being ready to part with any object which your King may designate, and by refusing to fix your affections on aught beside—that you hold everything else as cheap. When, too, the last predicted shaking of all things shall take place, and every creature fortune be swept away, you shall have a "treasure in the heavens that faileth not—where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth."



## SERMON V.

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### THE PEARL.

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Matt. xiii. 45, 46.

“THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE UNTO A MERCHANTMAN, SEEKING GOODLY PEARLS; WHO, WHEN HE HAD FOUND ONE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE, WENT AND SOLD ALL THAT HE HAD, AND BOUGHT IT.”

It was intimated in our last discourse, that the parable immediately preceding this, illustrated the effect which the Gospel had upon a soul, which, in its inquiries after pardon and salvation, had proceeded much further than the person who would engage our attention now.

In the first, we meet with one already deeply convinced that eternal life is the only treasure of any real worth. We behold him forsaking every earthly pleasure and pursuit, and devoting his time and energies exclusively to a laborious search for the things which make for his peace. But, in the parable before us, we are introduced to one who was far from having learnt this preliminary lesson—who was a mere seeker after happiness, and determined to pursue it in any path which might hold out the prospect of his reaching it, even though it might lead him far from heaven and from God.

Instead, then, of a miner digging for a certain spe-

cific treasure, the discovery and possession of which can alone give him satisfaction, and tempt him to rest, as in the first parable—there is now brought to our notice, an individual engaged in traffic, with unsanctified and selfish, although with what the world would call honest ends. We are thus called upon to contemplate the effect which the means devised and used by the grace of God for the reconciliation of sinners unto himself, produce upon a character who may be likened to “a merchantman seeking goodly pearls.”

We have, then, here one who is not troubled with any nice points of casuistry, as to what is right or wrong—what will please or offend God; his simple object is to enrich or bless himself; and if he can do this, in spite of the Most High, his conscience will not be disturbed. He is like a traveller who has not set out for any particular spot, but is reckless whither he wends his way, if he can only find a pleasant and comfortable lodging-place. He is like a jeweller who does not trade in a particular kind of precious stones, but will barter for any which will tend most to his advantage. Now, that such characters are common, every observer of human nature will tell you. That they are, too, dangerous in the extreme, it will require only a moment's consideration to admit. What evils may not some momentary impulse prompt them to inflict on others! Into what a disastrous shipwreck may they be decoyed by some false light, or steered by their own fallible judgments!

If it were not, indeed, for the checks and barriers which the society of fallen men, in mere self-defence, imposes and erects for the restraint of its natural mem.

bers, who are all, more or less, under the influence of this principle, what frightful scenes would be generally witnessed! It may be true, that desire for happiness is the unconscious mainspring of all human action—that misery is shunned as well by the spiritual as the sensual; but there can be nothing more unsafe or criminal than for a creature to set before himself—as the object to secure which he will strain every nerve, and make all other things subservient—the attainment of his own happiness.

God even may, and does, appeal to the understanding of such selfish characters, and thus induce them to pursue their best interests. He may show them that happiness is to be obtained only in one way, by real obedience to His commands. What, too, would be the effect even upon the best saints, as men are constituted, if their highest happiness were not identified with their duty and allegiance to God, it would require some superhuman mind to discover, and a divine pen to depict. Still, the glory of the Most High, in whatsoever we do, is to be the object which the faithful and enlightened have in view. Consciously to make our own happiness the paramount object of our hearts, is to dethrone God, and to place His sceptre in the hand of the idol self. See what calamity such a proud and unsanctified motive—more or less universally operating in ungodly hearts—inflicts upon a fallen world; and that, too, notwithstanding the hinderances to its development, which are raised by divine Providence and human law!

The character, then, represented by the merchantman in our parable, is one whose impulses and reason-

ings are ungodly, and who will go wherever they direct, except so far as prudence, after consulting circumstances and consequences, may forbid. He is only so far, therefore, confined in his choice of the pearls which may attract his eye, and awaken the desire to secure them as his own. But within these large limits he seeks with utter recklessness, in every direction, for goodly pearls. He cares not where the pearl be found, whether in heaven or on earth.

But the question here arises, How could our Saviour represent anything earthly by what is considered precious? Brethren, he means not to intimate that everything under heaven will not in the end prove unsatisfactory, fleeting, and vile. For in the word of God, this truth is taught on almost every page. It is not intended, then, here, by the use of the word "pearls," to show what worldly things really are, but to represent them in the light in which they appear to carnal eyes, and as they even prove, perhaps, for awhile, to the experience and tastes of the unconverted man. And that they do yield to his unsanctified nature all the satisfaction and delight of which it is capable, is what may and must be admitted to accord with truth. In his sight, the things of this life are the only treasures worth possessing. Such pleasant experience of them in the past as he has enjoyed, and such attractive qualities as his ardent imagination endues them with, urge him to pursue them with all the avidity which characterizes the merchant, when he seeks for goodly pearls.

We are called upon, then, first, to observe the course of a character that is wholly under the influ-

ence of the natural and ungodly impulse of a desire for happiness. As such a one looks around upon this wide and diversified world, how many objects present themselves as candidates for his affections!—how many paths, as avenues to the most alluring prospects, tempt his wayward feet! The world seems strewed, before his inexperienced eyes, with goodly pearls! He takes up one and another, and cannot be convinced of its worthlessness until he tests it in the crucible of his experience. Possibly the same individual may have neither the inclination nor the power to try consecutively each of the ten thousand promising, but deceptive ways of securing happiness, which the world offers. Long before he has run through the entire round, he may reach the close of life; or he may despair of ever reaching that which he first aspired after. Still, it is a notorious fact, that the disappointed worldling often invents some new method of retrieving his blighted hopes. And it will serve our purpose, if we consider the same person as successively endeavoring, in various modes, to discover some object upon which the deep longings of his nature can fasten.

It matters not how superficial may be the desire by which we are prompted; if the heart be brought under its power, nothing but the experienced insufficiency of its gratification will result in its renunciation.

How many a one, then, first strives, from the dictation of or conformity with *fashion*, to derive that which will please and satisfy himself! Whatever may be said, too, of the worthlessness of this pearl, yet it would be sheer ignorance to deny that it has at least some real temporary value. That law which all, more

or less, feel the necessity of complying with, is held in universal estimation. And there must be some ground upon which such an opinion is based. The thing itself is of some consequence. That there is, then, a satisfaction in sitting upon the throne of even the fashionable world, should not be denied—that even the favored courtiers of the palace may feel themselves justified, in the deference which they expect, is obvious. There is none, be he ever so powerful and high, who is excluded from the dominion of the master whom they serve. Even “the first gentleman in Europe,” as George the Fourth was called, it is said was, in this respect, the servile follower of an ingenious upstart. Yet this pearl need not be set in the groundwork of ridicule, but in that of simple truthfulness, in order to show how contemptible it appears, when that immortal spirit which God hath given us, views it as its priceless ornament. The acknowledged dictators in what is sometimes called “fashionable society,” are often known to be mere senseless idols, which are worshipped because he and she have been dressed by some tailor, or milliner and mantua-maker. Nay, if they, and not their workmen, be the real kings—giving law to the world for which they live—it is worse. For how supremely trifling, to spend one’s time in devising the set of drapery, or in tying a peculiar knot!

Or if fashion be regarded as extending to etiquette, and even to the higher manners, which only the select few can appreciate, how hollow and unsatisfying are the pleasures which are to be reaped within this envied circle! No trust is exercised in each other, even

among its most favored votaries. Inward contempt is but thinly veiled behind outward homage. Under a restrained exterior, too, afflictive passions often rage, and prey upon the inner man. Or, if natural amiability insure some degree of quietness, in what heartless customs is the fashionist doomed to pass his life! It can scarcely happen that a noble soul can long seek for its highest portion in such a coterie. Even though we resort to other worldly methods of gratifying self, the utmost that the wise in this respect content themselves with, is to leave this sway of fashion to its devotees, and perhaps silently, and without much care, to observe and follow its laws to such a degree as is allowable, and as will not render them singular.

This renunciation will often occur, even among those whose hearts are unchanged, and who have not savingly learnt the lesson, that "the fashion of this world passeth away." But in what light will they regard "fashion," who have been taught to view their entire earthly existence as a vapor, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away! How does the grace of fashion perish in the last hours of life! Though while they do well unto themselves, they be admired and envied, yet, "as a dream, when one awaketh, so does the Lord, when he awakes, despise the image" of the leaders and followers of the fashion of this world. No experienced character, then, will long consider fashion as a goodly pearl.

But will our disappointed seeker for happiness now resort to *pleasure*, as the best means of securing his ungodly end? This very commonly happens. Fashion is often viewed by its votaries as a mere means to an

end. The rank and admiration which many endeavor to gain through it, they propose to use only as a ladder to some eligible settlement in life. And when disappointment in this respect occurs, at once they change their course. They become, as to character and personal appearance, entirely reckless. Free scope is given to the most unbridled passions and lusts. Instead of promenading the streets, gaily and fashionably clad, and associating with circles, whose exterior, at least, commands the respect and envy of most, the youth begins to frequent the haunts of dissipation and infamy. The penalty of a broken constitution, it may be, is soon entailed by a career of the grossest indulgence; and the experience of utter insufficiency, even while gratifying every desire, and of the despair and ruin which follow, proves to his own satisfaction, that *pleasure* is not a "goodly pearl."

Or, if he plunge not into such an abyss as this, but float upon the surface of society, and be known as one who consults his own ease and gratification at every step—like a butterfly alighting upon every flower that attracts—still, in even this apparently superficial character, there are deep wants, which all that such a life is capable of yielding, will not satisfy. There are miscarriages and bereavements, which will often force reflection upon the mind. In the midst of apparent gaiety, there may be inward despondency and wretchedness; and the envied man of pleasure might be glad to exchange his lot with the frugal and despised, whose aspirations would be considered as amounting to madness, if they rose higher than contentment with their portion on the earth.

But how would such afflictive thoughts be barbed, and rankle in the mind, when God's threatenings in his word, so strikingly confirmed by his faithful providence, arrest attention; and, in the midst of reckless pleasure, this writing is read upon the wall: "Rejoice, O young man! in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." By such an anticipation, the "night of one's pleasure is turned into fear;" and, instead of the merchantman having taken up a "goodly pearl," it proves a sharp stone, which, the tighter he grasps it, the more it pierces his hand.

But, thirdly, cases have been known, where, after fashion and pleasure have been tried and found wanting, the seeker of happiness has allowed *ambition* to take possession of his mind, and flatters himself that place and power will confer all that he has in view. But how often is pre-eminent ability, when coupled with honesty, frustrated in every attempt at self-exaltation! The populace will seldom bear independence on the part of candidates for their favor. The most sanguine hopes of the noblest natures among the ambitious are thus blighted, before their object is reached. As a consequence, gloom often fills their mind, and the world seems covered with a pall.

Or if success attend our efforts, and the earthly pinnacle of power be reached, although victory over difficulties and opposers may, at first, lead us to exult, yet the cares of office furrow the face, and may even cause premature decay. Possibly, too, we may outlive the period of our exaltation, and, in a subsequent

obscurity, then hard to be borne, we may spend the remnant of our days. While wearing the crown, our head was thus uneasy; and afterward, the lamentation of the English cardinal is wrung from our unavailing and afflictive remorse: "Had I but served my God with half the zeal I served my king, he would not in mine age have left me naked to mine enemies." Such, at least, when they come to encounter "the last enemy," is the uniform confession of those who have outstripped all rivals in the race for power, and have been enabled to look from the goal with contempt upon every distanced competitor.

Thus does God visit every one who is disobedient to the heavenly vision, when it addressed him, saying: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." Sooner or later, those who have "kindled a fire, and compassed themselves about with sparks, who have walked in the light of their fire, and in the sparks that they have kindled, have this of God's hand, that they lie down in sorrow." However captivating, then, may be the path which ambition prompts the seeker of happiness to pursue, in the end he finds that the reward which he obtains is not a "godly pearl."

But fourthly, the character represented by the merchantman in our parable, does not, even at this point, give over his search. The retired and mortified governor, or president, ceases to serve the ungrateful public, and turns his attention to that which he persuades himself to regard as more substantial, and which he would fain call his own; "he makes gold his hope, and saith unto the fine gold, *Thou art my confidence.*" But, although the secret avenues to fortune

may be familiar to one who has so long held the keys of their gates in his grasp, and he may consequently turn everything into treasure by his touch; nay, though he at first rejoice, "because his wealth is great, and because his hand hath gotten much," yet he soon finds that this itself is "an iniquity to be punished by the judge." Illustrations, indeed, are so common, of "a man's life not consisting in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," that each of my hearers is prepared to expect the announcement, in accordance with God's word, that this "merchantman" "is not satisfied with the silver which he loves." Nay, every observer of events would consider it miraculous, if the "woe" which is denounced by the prophet were not poured out unto the uttermost upon "him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his house on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil." Ultimately, the "rich man fades away in his ways; his silver and his gold is not able to deliver him in the day of the wrath of the Lord," and, "pierced through with many sorrows," he is "drowned in destruction and perdition."

Experience and foresight, then, are sufficient to convince every heaper up of riches, that although his soul has been searching for "goodly pearls," yet he has found none in all that wealth which God has given him power to get.

But, finally, shall this seeker after happiness renounce fashion, pleasure, power, and wealth as his dependence, and resort in his old age to *philosophy*, as his solace and support? Such an experience as his now is, superinduced upon good natural talents, may

soon acquire treasures of wisdom and knowledge. So universal may be the acquaintance of a man like this with the world and its affairs, that it may be no vain boast on his part, of there "being to him nothing new under the sun." But, while such earthly knowledge has its uses, and cannot but command human respect, yet it utterly fails of yielding to its possessor that which he sought for in its pursuit. It "puffs him up." But, although not "proud," without some seeming ground for his pretensions, yet he "knows nothing" which confers happiness and peace upon himself. Though he may render all nature tributary to his comfort, yet nature can yield nothing which provides for the wants and satisfies the longings of the soul. Nay, the more one knows the more sensible does he become that there are unfathomable necessities which no natural knowledge can point out the means of supplying—that there are certain and overwhelming evils which must overtake all ere long; and thus the greatest earthly philosopher is forced, with Solomon, to acknowledge, that "in much wisdom is much grief; and that he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." And, moreover, "how dieth the wise man? as the fool." "One event happeneth to them all." Then the wise man saith in his heart, "As it happeneth to the fool so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then he saith in his heart that this also is vanity."

Having now run through the entire round, and experiencing only "vexation of spirit" in all—the original seeker for happiness has learnt "to hate life, and to feel that every work which is done under the

sun is grievous unto him." Whither, then, shall this merchantman look or go in his search for "goodly pearls?" He, who felt certain at the outset of securing such "an increase of goods as to have need of nothing, is now convinced that he is poor, and blind, and naked, and has need of all things." Even the blessings of his fallen state, this ungodly seeker after happiness sees, have been turned into curses; and on the verge of despair he cries out: "O, wretched man that I am!"

But ere this unsuccessful merchantman gives over his search, let him seriously ask—Wherefore is this? Why has the mighty, and wise, and holy, and good God, thus cursed the earth, that it can yield to me only briars and thorns? and thus cursed me, that I am as incapable of extracting any real substantial blessedness from all things under heaven, as a dead man is? The resolution of this point excites his deepest interest. His soul now loathes that, after which it had so recently hungered and thirsted. He now turns away from all that the world offers, with the exclamation: "There is death in it!" The countenance of this disappointed worldling falls, like Cain's. And, in answer to his inquiry, God informs this gloomy spirit, that if "he does not well, it is because sin lieth at the door:" that he himself is cursed, because "he has not continued in all things which are written in the book of-the law, to do them;" that he is, to all intents and purposes, dead to true and lasting happiness, in consequence of, and as a punishment to his being "dead in trespasses and sins;" nay, that his late persevering endeavors to refresh himself out of

creature cisterns, was the most sinful obstinacy in refusing to drink from the fountain of living waters; and that these creature cisterns have been broken, that so they might hold no water for him; that the whole earth has been bidden to yield only thorns and thistles to man, because he has fallen.

Now, then, the merchant has learnt that the pearl for which he has been seeking, Adam had in God; that God made the soul of man such, that it could find only in himself that for which it must forever naturally long; and that, when man cast off God as his portion, God even cursed those things which he had made and pronounced "good" at the first, and so now the creatures cannot yield to man, that which they originally would have done; and instead of blessings they prove to the sinner only curses in the end. The laborious search for happiness and the disappointed experience of the unbeliever have thus far resulted in endowing him with an evil treasure; he has become conscious of deeper necessities in himself, and of all supply from creatures having been cut off; and in wretchedness at his prospects, and under deep anguish at the conviction of that guilt of his nature and his life which has brought him under such a curse—this alien from God cries out, "What must I do?" In God's word of grace he reads, that "*the* seed of the woman should bruise" under his feet the cause of all this evil under which he now groans; that from "the wind and tempest" which now sweep around and descend upon the defenceless head of this homeless wanderer, "*a man* shall be as an hiding-place, and a covert." He learns that God, in his boundless love,

has descended from his throne to seek out and deliver his wretched outcast, that God has even clothed and manifested himself in flesh, that so he might bestow himself in a closer and more unreserved way than ever upon the consciously-lost soul.

What an all-sufficient proof, too, of the fixed self-sacrificing character of this gracious purpose is afforded upon Calvary. There, the now wretched worldling, convicted of his sins, sees "Christ made a curse for him, in order to redeem him from the curse." He beholds all his own ill-desert laid upon and borne by that Divine Lamb which God hath provided as an offering for sin. He is assured by the Gospel that, if, with an utter renunciation of his own merits, nay, with the most unreserved self-condemnation, he trust in Jesus as his sacrifice for sin, at once all the righteousness of God's incarnate Son will be reckoned to his soul, and the reprobate will be "accepted in the Beloved." He is told that "Christ will then dwell in his heart by faith," and become there "the hope of glory,"—that the grace and presence of this his recovered God will suffice for every time of need; that his Redeemer will reverse the condition in which he was by nature, and where his blessings were cursed, by now turning even evils into blessings, and making all things work for good; that the very fullness of the Godhead bodily will be made over to him, by covenant, as his eternal inheritance, that through Christ he will have some foretaste in time, and the full enjoyment hereafter of more blessings than Adam lost—an admission to more than angelic closeness to him who sits upon the throne, and the privilege of singing a song

to the praise of God's grace, which no man can sing but they who are redeemed from the earth.

Disappointed, then, in his search for "goodly pearls," the merchant has here found the "pearl of great price." Prepared by Providence to sell all that he had—taught by God's spirit through his word, he now buys, by an exclusive trust, "Christ as his all and in all;" and the testimony of his experience, both in time and eternity, will be, that of not one-half of the preciousness of this pearl had he been told. He uniformly challenges all things to separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus his Lord.

My hearers, how many of you are now recklessly pursuing the first stages in the course of that character whose footsteps we have traced to-night, and an illustration of whose case our Lord's merchantman affords! Oh! that you would be convinced now, both of its madness and sin; for you may not be spared to go the entire round—that you would, in the way described, at once make Christ, the pearl of great price, yours. Then experience will enable you to give this counsel to the world: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth God in Christ." You will fully appreciate the infatuated children of this world; and as you look on them, will exclaim with David: "There be many that say, who will show us any good, Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time when their corn and their wine increased."

## SERMON VI.

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### THE PARABLE OF THE FIG-TREE.

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Luke xiii. 6-9.

“HE SPAKE ALSO THIS PARABLE: A CERTAIN MAN HAD A FIG-TREE PLANTED IN HIS VINEYARD; AND HE CAME AND SOUGHT FRUIT THEREON, AND FOUND NONE. THEN SAID HE UNTO THE DRESSER OF HIS VINEYARD, BEHOLD, THESE THREE YEARS I COME SEEKING FRUIT ON THIS FIG-TREE, AND FIND NONE: CUT IT DOWN; WHY CUMBERETH IT THE GROUND? AND HE, ANSWERING, SAID UNTO HIM, LORD, LET IT ALONE THIS YEAR ALSO, TILL I SHALL DIG ABOUT IT, AND DUNG IT: AND IF IT BEAR FRUIT, WELL: AND IF NOT, THEN AFTER THAT THOU SHALT CUT IT DOWN.”

THE exact object of our Lord in this parable cannot be ascertained, except by a close examination of the conversation which previously took place between him and some of those who, the evangelist says, were “present at that season.” An important general law of God’s kingdom, too, may be elicited from that conversation; although the law is not explicitly stated. The knowledge of it will be useful to us upon all occasions; but we are now especially bound to discover and apply it, as our parable is only an illustration of it.

Urged then, perhaps, simply by that propensity to communicate sad tidings, which the observers of human nature have laid down as one of its characteristics,—

some of our Saviour's companions "told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices." Though these persons belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, yet the Governor of Judea hesitated not to proceed in this summary way. Whether this act led to that rupture which, we know, afterwards existed between Herod and Pilate, or whether it was itself occasioned by some previous misunderstanding between these rulers, there is no means of ascertaining. Indeed, we know not that the sufferers themselves were guilty of any crime which merited this severe punishment at the hands of the governor. They may have been the innocent victims of his spite against their king. Rightly viewing, however, man's act as the providence of God, our Lord's informers drew the wrong inference, that "these Galileans must have been sinners above all the Galileans," because, in the very act of typifying their faith in the Lamb that was to be slain for sin, divine vengeance seemed to overtake them, and their own blood was made to mingle with that of the sacrifices which they were offering to God.

Against such a construction of this providence our Saviour protested, and warned his informers, that "unless they repented they should all likewise perish."

Selecting, then, another instance of calamity, in which the hand of God was more evidently and immediately concerned, Jesus denies that even it afforded any premises for the conclusion which they were disposed to draw, and reiterates the warning which had just proceeded from his lips. "Or," inquires the Lord, "those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above

all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

It is not here taught that the sufferers upon these two occasions were not sinners—for, without sin, no evil could ever have befallen any creature in any world,—all that is insisted is, that they were not pre-eminent in guilt. It is against the supposition that man is a capable expounder of the providence of God—it is against that tendency in human nature to connect calamity with some heinous crime, that our Saviour protests. He would teach that it is impossible, either in our own or another's case, to trace providential acts to the causes which led to them in the divine mind; that none hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, neither doth he give an account of his matters unto any man. He would inform us that sudden, and what is called unnatural death—if any persist in regarding it as a special mark of God's displeasure—(though we are far from doing so,) that all divine judgments are ordered in a way inscrutable to creatures. They may have been occasioned by occurrences in the spiritual world unknown and unsuspected by us.

Often, if we could see the nature and extent of that divine mercy which went before the affliction, although we might indeed be terror-struck by the judgment which ultimately befell—still, often, if the veil were taken away, we might not be able to detect any positively heinous transgression which seemed to call down the vengeance,—mere acts of omission might appear to be the only crimes, a simple neglect of the offers and means of grace might be proved to be the only offence,—and yet our minds would be so im-

pressed, as well with the previous forbearance of the Almighty, as with the overwhelming force of the stroke which he finally dealt, that we would cry out in amazement: "Behold both the goodness and severity of God!" This is the law of the kingdom of Heaven, which our Saviour proceeds to illustrate in the parable that we have read.

Some have supposed, that in thus impressing upon his hearers this principle of God's government, special reference was had to the divine forbearance towards Jerusalem, and the overthrow with which it finally met—that those two instances of calamity which had been adduced were only foretastes of the universal judgment in reserve—that as these Jews had been killed by darts and falling walls, so, unless they repented, all would likewise perish amid the ruins of the city and under the weapons of the Roman soldiery. That the case of the Jews was included in the law which Christ lays down, cannot be doubted; yet, with an ancient Father of the church, we conclude, that what was a warning to the Jews is applicable to all, and especially to us. The principle here illustrated is one upon which God has proceeded in every age. Before the deluge, one hundred and twenty years were vouchsafed the earth for repentance—during which God's Spirit strove with man. Ere Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, Abraham was permitted to intercede; and God evinced his willingness to spare. The second coming of our Lord is deferred with this explicit purpose—that "all should come to repentance." It is, then, a principle upon which God always proceeds, that we are called upon to consider now.

Its illustration begins with these words: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard." How often do the sacred Scriptures, brethren, compare us to trees! They assure us, that "a tree is known by its fruits." The psalmist likens the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, to "a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." While Jeremiah illustrates the ultimately comfortless condition of the man that maketh flesh his aim, by the state of "a heath in the desert, inhabiting parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited."

But we are further told, that the owner of the vineyard before us, "came and sought fruit upon his fig-tree, and found none." How numerous, too, are the passages of God's word, in which the works of men are compared to fruit! "Ye shall know them," said our Lord, of his professed disciples, "by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." "There is a wonderful significance," says an occasionally discriminating writer, "in this simple image—the fruit being the organic produce and evidence of the inner life, not something arbitrarily attached or fastened on it from without. There are three kinds of works spoken of in the New Testament, which may all," he justly thinks, "be illustrated from this image: first *good* works, when, the tree being made good, bears fruit of the same character—then *dead* works, such as have a fair outward appearance, but are not the

living growth of the renewed man—and lastly, *wicked* works, when the corrupt tree bears fruit manifestly of its own kind.”

But, to pursue our simile, how often, too, is God represented, when inquiring into the characters and lives of his people, as the owner of a vineyard searching for fruit, and complaining because he finds none, or else that which is not good. We read in the prophet: “the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes—he looked for judgment, but behold oppression, and for righteousness, but behold a cry:” and again, “Israel is an empty vine.”

The owner examining his barren fig-tree, in our parable, is then God looking upon the soul, which bears no fruit to him. But our parable proceeds: “Then, said the owner unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?” Whom does this “dresser of the vineyard” represent? It is He, you observe, whose office it would have been to cut down the tree: evidently, He into whose hands the affairs of the vineyard are committed: in other words, He, who is head over all things to His Church. And, Oh! what a faithful, and tender, and self-denying dresser of the vineyard is the Lord Jesus Christ! All feel that he is authorized in the appeal: “What more could I have done to my vineyard that I have not done in it?” What love, and care, and wisdom hath he manifested in the treatment of his conscious plants! He hath

watered the vineyard with his own blood—ordering all things to fructify his field—never slumbering night or day, but watching to see if it would bear fruit. In all this, however, he is but the Father's agent—bound to execute the will of the first Person of the Trinity, who represents the rights and claims of God in the arrangement and disposal of the trees.

Nor is the Father unconcerned. He, too, is graciously anxious for fruit. "Lo, these three years I come!" At every return of the season in which fruit is borne, and when it may be of right expected, "the Lord walketh amid the trees of the garden." His own love for the trees which are planted in the visible courts of his house, prompts the desire that they should bear. His interest in the glory of "the dresser of his vineyard," makes him unwilling that any plant should be barren, or should droop and die. In every case, therefore, he forbears. But his long-suffering hath bounds. God's claims must not be too long deferred. Christ's efforts must not be made in vain. And "Lo, these three years he had come seeking fruit, and found none." His voice is, therefore, heard amidst the trees, "cut this one down." It is unproductive and useless—it also "cumbers the ground."—It not only occupies the space which might be filled by a fruitful tree, but it absolutely vitiates the soil, and prevents the growth of all around.

Alas! how truly is the picture here drawn of many a soul in every church and congregation in the land! Bringing forth no fruits meet for repentance, and, too, destroying much good,—yet, all the while, the object of the dresser's care—the means of grace abundantly

applied, instruction given to the mind, appeals made to the affections, warning and invitation repeated over and again—yet the heart only hardening in impenitence, and by the influence of example countenancing, and leading others on, in unbelief and sin! Is it wonderful that God's long-suffering at length is stayed, and that he enjoins "the dresser of his vineyard to cut it down, as cumbering the ground?"

But now hear, in the parable, the intercession of our great High-Priest. "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

Brethren, how full of compassion is he whom God hath appointed as the one with whom we have to do! He wept over Jerusalem, even after its doom was sealed: and so long as any prospect of success is held out, he will persevere in the use of the measures of grace—nay, he will be more diligent than ever in their application. He will lay bare the roots, scoop out the native earth, and enrich the soil—that so perchance, the tree may bear fruit.

How often is the antitype of this witnessed in the church of Christ! A fruitless soul is transplanted to a richer soil, brought within the influence of a gospel fully, clearly, freely preached—associated with the prayerful and spiritually-minded—and breathing somewhat of the atmosphere of heaven on earth: or else, new life and vigor are imparted from on high to means that had been previously used; the word is preached with more distinctness and directness—the people of God are more sensibly alive to the interests of Christ's

kingdom, and spiritual things seem possessed of a reality and attractiveness.

Such are some of the means which "the dresser of the vineyard" asks and obtains permission to employ with the fruitless soul. Yet, though these measures be prompted by love, and diligently applied, there is, you perceive by the parable, throughout, an explicit understanding between the Father and the Son, that they are to terminate at an appointed time. If mercy fail, judgment is to take its place. Nay, even he at whose intercession sentence was deferred, and mercy continued and increased, pledges himself to execute with his own arm the Father's will, and to cut down the tree.

Much, then, as grace, prolonged and multiplied, deserves our gratitude and praise, is there not a fearful aspect in which it may be viewed? It is proved to be the precursor of judgment hastening on. It is that axe of which John the Baptist spake, laid at the root of the tree, ready to be taken up at any moment, and to cut down the tree which bears no fruit. It is in this light that the rich enjoyment of the means of grace is viewed by all who have a spiritual eye. But Oh! what a different conclusion do the carnal reach! "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil." Their inward feeling is: "To-morrow shall be as this day, and more abundant." They base their conclusions on the past. Their unbelief and impenitence have thus far not only been borne with through a course of years; but the more they neglected and despised the riches of his grace,

the higher in outward privileges have they been exalted. "Not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth them to repentance, they treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." The gentle warnings and gracious appliances of God are construed into licenses for sin, until at length destruction cometh upon them unawares.

Well might even the heathen—as they watched the ways of Providence, and ascribed its acts to their false gods—say, "The feet of the avenging deities are shod with wool." Yet, though God finally meet his enemies in the way, "to rend the caul of their heart as a bear robbed of her whelps," still he crosses not their path, by bursting from a thicket; but the suddenness and surprise are to be ascribed to their being "like the deaf adder which stoppeth her ears." It comes upon them thus, "because, when he called, they refused; when he stretched out his hand, they would not regard; but set at naught all his counsel, and would none of his reproof."

From the utmost limits of his grace, God at once proceedeth to the harshest measures of his justice. From nourishing his tree, "the dresser of the vineyard" begins at once to cut it down, and it is gathered up to be burned. Behold, then, the goodness and severity of God! We are enabled, through our parable, to see much within the veil. It explains a great deal of the feelings and ways of God.

We learn here, first, *the forbearance of God the Father*. His ways are not as our ways. He is not easily provoked; therefore it is, we are not at once con-

sumed. Sometimes, in an act of sovereign justice, he may require "the dresser of his vineyard" to curse a fruitless tree at first sight; and it may at once be withered at the roots. But generally, his property is to have mercy. "Lo, these three years I come!" How easily does he yield to the suggestion of a longer continuance, and even increase of his grace towards the soul that hath abused it all! Nay, the dresser of the vineyard petitions not, except according to his will. Both in his prayers in our behalf, as well as in the doctrines which he teacheth us, the Saviour speaketh only those words which were given to him by the Father, in those counsels of eternity where all beforehand was arranged. The vineyard itself was committed to this dresser's care, by the Father's love. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." Oh! the riches of the goodness and forbearance and long suffering of God!

But, secondly, *the word of God here reminds us of the gracious grounds of all this forbearance.* It is a thing evidently unmeet in itself; the Scriptures, too, everywhere recognize it as improper for the Lord of hosts to have an unfruitful vineyard. Can anything be more unfit, than that the mighty God, who is good and doeth good, should have rebellious or negligent servants? How can their toleration be consistent with what God owes to himself? Yet it is not in the first year that he is tempted to proceed to extremity; but "Lo! these three years I come, seeking fruit, and find none." Why this forbearance?

It is because, according to our parable, he hath left all in the dresser's hand. Oh! brethren, look for one

moment at this dresser of the vineyard of our God. Is it allowable for God to alienate any portion of his creation—to make it thus over to another, and to part with his glory? Oh! no. It is because God's "name is in him," that these interests are committed to the dresser's hands.

But, then, how can the Son endure what it would not be lawful for the Father to permit, and allow this unfruitful vineyard to escape his withering curse—nay, diligently apply himself to make it bear? It is because he hath purchased it for his own inheritance; it is because he hath offered the fruits of his own righteousness instead, and is thus endued with the right, in accordance with the Father's love and his own grace, to dress the vineyard, and to see if its trees will not, under his culture, bring forth fruit to God. Hence it is, that all things are under the dresser's charge. Hence the desire of the Son to persevere, and the easy persuasion of the Father to forbear, may be readily understood. The one is grace; the other is love. Oh! could we by the eye of faith, penetrate the heavenly world, and see those realities which our parable shadows forth; could we behold our glorious intercessor at God's right hand, appreciate those blessings for which he pleads in our behalf—read the feelings which prompt the Son to pray, and the Father to grant another year to our probation, so far unimproved—would any heart be so ungrateful and so suicidal, as longer to hate its own mercies and to love death?

But thirdly, our parable teaches that *there is but one of two alternatives—either fruit must be borne, or the tree be*

*cut down.* A pledge to this effect hath passed between those—neither one jot or tittle of whose word shall fail, though heaven and earth shall pass away. As sure as God is true, his forbearance towards every barren tree hath an end, appointed between him and the Son, though unknown to us. As sure as the pledge of Christ, he will cease to be the minister of grace, and prove to be the executioner of justice upon every fruitless soul. Oh! in what two different lights does the incarnate Son of God present himself in our parable to the soul which is finally lost! Dressing and nourishing the tree, and then cutting it down. Bleeding on the cross, and inviting the wanderer to his arms—then cursing and bidding him “Depart.” “Who shall be able to stand? who will not seek to hide himself from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, when the great day of his wrath is come?” Who among us will refuse any longer to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and feel the axe of God’s justice, as wielded by the arm of Christ?

But the last lesson we derive from our parable is this: *Unimproved mercy often exhibits most life and strength in its expiring moments.* This is God’s way of old. His ancient people were treated thus. Before the Babylonish captivity, his illustrious prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, were sent to instruct, and warn, and plead. Before their final overthrow, the Son of God himself, with his immediate followers, traversed the land of Judea, and went in and out among the people, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and calling on Israel to repent. Capernaum was thrust down

to hell from a heavenly exaltation. The dresser of the vineyard digs about the roots of the fruitless tree, and enriches its soil, ere he cuts it down. This is only what every enlightened mind might expect from the character of God and Christ. Nothing can tempt the Saviour to desist, until he try the power of his Gospel, unto its uttermost, to save. Ere, then, he give up the wandering soul as lost, he will cause the offers of his grace frequently to cross its path. He may produce, within, some feeling of its great wants; in the secret of retirement, and in the closet of the heart, he may make the most urgent and moving appeals—and just when, from these evidences of his grace, the soul flatters itself it stands high in his favor, that it can regain these helps at will, that it can secure its safety at any future moment, and bids its Saviour “go his way for this time, promising to call for him at a more convenient season”—just then, he lifts his hand and swears, “It shall never enter into his rest.” The barren fig-tree withers away and dies, fit henceforth only to be burned; or else it is forthwith cut down and cast into the fire.

Let me, then, in conclusion, call upon you, my unconverted hearers, *to improve this lesson, which you have now learned, both of the goodness and the severity of God.* Despair not, as though you were incapable of bearing fruit; because all the culture which you have heretofore received, has been in vain. Doubt not the power of the dresser of God’s vineyard to subject you to such treatment as will cause the barren fig-tree to put forth, and bud, and bear abundant fruit. Oh! he can endue the means which he employs with a virtue

that, in your case, he hath never done before. It will put new sap into the roots, which will be diffused throughout, which will give the tree new character and life, and cause it to bear. He can impart that Spirit who giveth life to the letter of the Gospel. If, with the engrossing desire and hope of this living and effectual grace, you will receive and use those means of knowing his will and seeking his favor, with which you have been all along so abundantly supplied, but which you have neglected and misimproved; if you will diligently and perseveringly hearken and consider, and give the Redeemer no rest until he quicken your dead soul—although these cannot merit salvation, yet he will be acting differently from what he ever did, if he suffer you to perish. He will confer upon you all the blessings of that salvation which he was at such pains to purchase with his righteousness and blood. There shall be given you repentance unto salvation, which needeth not to be repented of. Faith will spring up in your unbelieving soul. Works, meet for repentance and signs of faith, will be duly performed.

When the time agreed upon in your case, between the dresser and owner of the vineyard, shall come, you will not be cut down. What the tree has brought forth will show, that it is meet to be transplanted into the upper garden of the Lord, where, close by the river of God, it shall bear fruit unto life everlasting.



## SERMON VII.

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ST. PAUL RECONCILED WITH ST. JAMES.

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James ii. 18.

“SHOW ME THY FAITH WITHOUT THY WORKS, AND I WILL SHOW THEE  
MY FAITH BY MY WORKS.”

THESE words, and the whole tenor of our chapter and epistle, have been supposed by many contradictory to the teaching of St. Paul, who has been emphatically styled the Apostle of Grace. As no part of Scripture, if all proceed from the same infallible Spirit, can be subversive of another, the consequence has been, that infidels of every stamp have gloried in the apparently adverse doctrines of two penmen who possess equal claims to inspiration, and have regarded this portion of Holy Writ as affording the means of successfully assailing the authority of God's entire word.

Self-righteous errorists have likewise looked upon St. James as the advocate of their proud hearts; and in their untiring contests with the humbling doctrines of the Gospel, by which we are led to trust for pardon and acquittal in the alone righteousness of Christ, have uniformly resorted to the epistle before us, as their stronghold. The effect has been, that the unhumbled hearts of carnal hearers have been bolstered up in their attempts to seek justification, either exclu-

sively by the works of the law, or else by the impossible admixture of Christ's merits and man's deservings. The spiritually unwary, too, in the midst of difficulties, which they could not, without an unpardonable wresting of God's word, remove—have either felt themselves perplexed, not knowing whither to look for satisfaction on the most important of all points, or, if convinced of what is true and needful in their own case, have yet been beguiled, in view of the apparent sanction which legalists derived from this portion of God's word, to countenance their soul-destroying errors.

Every preacher of the Gospel, rightly instructed in the nature of the truth, and in the state of the visible church, has felt and deplored the force of these things. The great Saxon Reformer, at one time, was tempted to deny the apostolic origin and divine authority of our entire epistle, lest his favorite, and, indeed, *the* cardinal doctrine of the Gospel should be overthrown thereby; although, as is well known, he afterwards saw and admired the beautiful consistency of Paul and James, and labored with unprecedented power and success to further their blended views in the gracious justification of the believer and his duty to seek for freedom from all sin.

We feel authorized, too, in saying, that no well-informed Christian of our own day, who is sensibly alive to the worth of souls, and to the power of the delusions which prevail, can hear our chapter read before a promiscuous assembly in the house of God, without fearful apprehension lest its wholesome teachings be perverted to the self-destruction of those for

whom Christ died. The necessity of a clear understanding of the method by which the Apostles are to be reconciled, and of obviating evils of the great magnitude by which we have characterized them, at once appears.

We therefore invite your attention to a very brief explanation of the easy and proper mode of showing the agreement between Paul and James, and to the duties which devolve on us therefrom.

At the outset, then, we say, it cannot be doubted by any ingenuous reader of St. Paul, that he taught the truth of the justification of every human sinner before the bar of God, by the exclusive righteousness of Christ; and that, possessed by the Holy Ghost, and jealous for the honors of the Redeemer, he labored to prove the uselessness of man's merits and works as a ground of acceptance with the holy God, and to show that salvation proceeds from free grace.

Although this theme, however, is the acknowledged burden of this apostle's pen, yet in no other part of Holy Writ can be found more spiritual and exalted views of the purity of the Christian's calling, and of the nature of those graces by which the believer is characterized. In the two epistles to the Roman and Galatian churches—written with special reference to the maintenance of free grace—will be found passages descriptive of the disciple's state, which are unsurpassed elsewhere, and which have caused the holiest of the sons of men to shrink from a comparison between their attainments and their duties. As examples of these, instance the 12th chapter of Romans, styled a body of Practical Divinity, and the 5th of Galatians, in

which the fruit of the Spirit is delineated. Need we remind you of that inimitable 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians, in which the grace of charity is so fully and glowingly described? Who that will examine himself in this mirror, does not not hide himself with shame and confusion of face? Other well-known extracts from the writings of St. Paul might be adduced, to establish his claims to stand in the van of even inspired writers in the war which is waged by God's people against the hosts of sin.

But, in pursuing such a course, speaker and hearer would impose on themselves a needless task. The whole spirit of this blessed apostle's works is fragrant with purity. Its feelings and aims are sanctified beyond the conception, much more beyond the description of an uninspired man. But we are not left to inference in exculpating our apostle from the charge which foolish and unevangelized men would bring against his character; as though in his views licentiousness were winked at, and the sin of the believer esteemed lightly: for this special perversion of his doctrine was several times brought before his own mind, and with what solemnity did he renounce it, or else with what depth of feeling did he condemn it.

After having proved the gracious economy under which the believer lived, he proposes the question which a carnal mind, still in love with sin, and looking out for a cloak of its maliciousness, would no doubt ask: "Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace?" to which he replies, "God forbid." In the beginning of the same chapter, the 6th of Romans, after having (in the conclusion of the preceding one)

graphically described "grace" as reigning by Jesus Christ our Lord, he asks: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" To which he gives the same solemn answer as before, "God forbid." In the 8th verse of the 3d chapter, after having admitted that God is more glorified by the pardon which he bestows on the sinner, than if sin had never been permitted to enter the universe, he alludes to a slanderous report of his doctrine, which had been circulated by some mischievous persons, as though he had enforced the duty of doing evil that good might come, when, with thorough indignation, he pronounces as just, the damnation of those who would be guilty of acting in this way, or of attributing such hellish effects to Gospel truth.

Such, then, was the necessity for holiness in the views of St. Paul, and such the strong language which he employed to enforce its obligation. But, notwithstanding these guards against the perversion of Gospel truth, it is quite evident, from the most cursory perusal of the different epistles, that there arose, even in apostolic days, men who had notoriously turned the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and who regarded the liberty to which they had been called, as the right to follow with impunity the biddings of their lusts. These professed to have a species of faith, which would shield them from the wrath of God, and yet allow them habitually, and without holy resistance to temptation and repentance for sin, to violate the commands of God.

It was evidently in referenee to such characters, degrading the name and reputation of Christ and his

Gospel in the eyes of men, that St. James was inspired to write the epistle before us. The first portion of our chapter amply suffices to prove, that they whom he addressed were entirely carnal in their walk and conversation; that they were not of those whom St. Paul himself describes as walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and as walking by faith, not by sight. They were the most shameless regarders of men, respecting not characters, but persons, and thus proving that they had none of the same mind in them which was in Christ; who was characterized, even by his enemies, as one who regarded not the persons of men.

Against this pretended association of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons, our apostle warns them in the opening verse of the chapter, and proceeds to illustrate how incompatible true Christian principle was with that conduct to which such a man-fearing state of mind would lead; by supposing the case of a rich worldling and a poor believer in one of their worshipping assemblies—the former seated in a comfortable and conspicuous place, while the latter was contemptuously bidden to sit under a fellow-professor's footstool. Such treatment of a brother for whom Christ died, the apostle pronounces a countenancing of those who blaspheme the name of that Redeemer, by which wealthy and indigent disciples were in common called—and a transgression of that supreme law of God, by which we were enjoined to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Nor would the apostle allow his readers to draw any distinction between the different commandments of God—since all proceeded from the same divine

source, and each was clothed with the self-same authority: He that said, Do not commit adultery, having also said, Do not kill. So that, though a man had committed no adultery, yet if he killed, he had become a transgressor of the law. They therefore should not esteem the standard which he had set up as sublimated and utopian; for though they kept the whole law—offending only in one point, and that the apparently small one of respect to persons, they were involved in universal guilt, and were convinced of the law as transgressors, to be dealt with accordingly. If they expected to be judged by the law of liberty—if they based their own hopes of salvation on God's not being rigorously bound down by justice to deal with them according to their own deserts, but freely justifying them according to the liberty of his own will—if they had tasted in their own case the preciousness of such unmixed mercy,—they were so to speak and do, as to exhibit the same mercy towards others which they expected for their own souls. For they might rest assured, that with what measure they meted to others, the same should be meted to them; and that he who showed no mercy, would in his own case, have judgment without mercy. All this teaching of St. James was in perfect accordance with that injunction of St. Paul—"use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." It was in strict consistence with the example of David, who, in the 119th Psalm, 45th verse, tells us—he allowed himself to "walk at liberty, only when he sought God's precepts."

Our apostle now proceeds to draw a distinction

between a dead and a living faith—between that bare intellectual assent to the truths of the Gospel scheme, and that heartfelt reception of its gracious offers—that closing with its provisions, which fills and sways the affections of the entire man, and regulates his conduct. And, by way of illustrating the difference between a dead or merely head-faith in the redemption that is in Christ, and the hearty appropriation of it to ourselves, he shows the emptiness and hypocrisy of a pretension to the grace of charity, while a hungry or naked Christian brother or sister is, with a kind tone, but real mockery, bidden to depart in peace, unfeared and unclothed. “Even so,” saith the apostle, “faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”

Now, brethren, what does all this prove. Simply that there is a spurious, as well as a true faith—that a justifying and saving faith is an operative principle in the Christian’s soul—influencing his thoughts, and words, and acts. But St. James still supposes, that a man, even when thus driven from his refuge of lies, may endeavor to shield himself by affirming, that he has faith, while another has works. In answer to this suggestion, he exclaims in the words of our text: “Show me thy faith without thy works; and I will show thee my faith by my works.” If you would have me or any of your fellow-men—who are no discerners of spirits, who can judge of the tree only by its fruits, who can ascertain the spiritual condition of a man only by outward things—if you would have us believe your claims as a child of light to be genuine, walk as a child of the light—if you profess to live in the Spirit, and would have us give you credit therefor,

walk in the Spirit. For our rule is, that “as the body of a man without the spirit of man is dead, so faith without works is dead also;” and we make no exception either in your case, or in that of any other person. Do you still plead that you believe,—but in this you surpass not the devils, for they also believe—nay, they are better than you, for their belief leads them to tremble when they disobey; but you trample on God’s authority without fear. Shelter not yourself either behind the holy men of old. For in what way was even our Father Abraham proved to be justified? In condescension to our weakness, how did the Omniscient one himself, who knows what is in man, and needeth not that any one should tell him, deign to express himself on Mount Moriah—was it not, “Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.” So that even Abraham shows us that he was justified in God’s sight—proves it to his own satisfaction and that of all his fellow-creatures, “by offering up Isaac his son upon the altar.”

Abraham’s faith was made perfect, reached the pinnacle of the assurance of hope by this self-sacrificing work; and thus the Scripture was fulfilled, to the satisfaction of all men, that there was a faith in him, to which righteousness was imputed. Rahab, too, proved to herself, proved to Joshua’s messengers, and when it afterwards came to be known, proved to all men, that she was a justified believer, that she really had faith in God, when at the risk of her own life, she hid the spies, and sent them away in peace.

Brethren, we trust it now clearly appears to have

been the object of the Holy Ghost, that great glorifier of Jesus, not through St. James, whom he inspired, to exalt man to the position of his own Redeemer, or to share the honors of his own salvation with the Son of God, by mingling man's works with Christ's righteousness, as the ground of the believer's justification before the bar of the Holy One of Israel; but simply to vindicate in the eyes of men the character of that faith which saves, by showing how operative and influential it always is in moulding the entire life. He, to whose eye all things are open and naked, requires not any outward proof of what is in the heart of man. God needeth not even to ascertain whether the feelings of love—the first and most immediate and spiritual effect of faith, pervade and characterize the soul—for he knoweth all things, and must evidently be aware of the existence of that faith in our hearts of which, if it be there, he is himself the author. So that inwardly felt and outwardly visible streams of the fountain of faith are not needed, answer, indeed, no end, in truth and before God in washing away our guilt.

But, then, there are other important purposes which these do effect. Our inwardly holy and loving feelings refresh our own souls, by assuring us that we are born of God—that we are created again in the image of God, which is righteousness and true holiness and love—that we have received Christ, and have had power given us to become the sons of God. And as our emotions of love towards God and man, prove to ourselves that our calling and election are sure—so the expression of our sentiments, and the exhibition of our feelings in our daily walk—make us living epistles

known and read of all men; and put to silence by well-doing, the ignorance of foolish men, who would speak against the self-emptied disciples of Christ as evil-doers.

You see, then, brethren, that while St. James, rightly understood, detracts not in the least from the exclusive merits of Christ's righteousness in gaining us acceptance with God, nor from the sole instrumentality of faith in interesting us therein—yet, jealous for the reputation of Gospel doctrine in this perverse world, he insists upon the necessity of all exemplifying the efficacy of their faith who claim to be possessors thereof—that aware, too, of our proneness to self-deception through the blindness of our self-love, he would drive us from all dependence in our inmost souls upon a pretended faith which evinces not its presence and power in our feelings and our lives. The truths and duties which flow from this exposition of our text are numerous and momentous. We have time only to advert to a few of them before we close.

Fellow-professors of the faith that is in Christ, have you been sanctified thereby in your feelings and lives? As you would avoid giving occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, seek to exhibit the purifying effects of Gospel belief in your daily walk; for carnal men who walk by sight, place reliance only on what is outward.

I beseech you seek sanctification:

1. As you love the pure Gospel.
2. As you love the name of Christ.
3. As you aspire after perfect assurance.
4. As you prize unclouded communion with God.



## SERMON VIII.

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### GOD'S USE OF EVIL SPIRITS.

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I Kings xxii. 22.

“AND HE SAID, THOU SHALT PERSUADE HIM, AND PREVAIL ALSO: GO FORTH, AND DO SO.”

SUCH is the fearful mission upon which God is represented as having sent the evil spirit, who offered to seduce a wicked king of Israel to pursue a wrong and fatal course.

There are two criminal and hurtful ways of treating a passage of this kind in God's word. On the one hand, we may undertake its consideration with a self-sufficient mind, and for the sake of showing the extent of our literary or spiritual acquirements: on the other, we may, under the pretext of humility, but really because we are unprepared to admit those essential truths upon which the justice and wisdom of such agency in God's government are based, refuse any attention to what has been graciously revealed for our learning. May we be preserved from either of these kinds of disrespect to our divine Teacher! and may the present speaker and hearers so deal with the words in the text, that they shall prove instructive and edifying to souls, and contribute to the glory of Him who uttered them!

The passage before us forms part of the prophet Micaiah's vision, as he stood before Ahab. This self-willed king had fully determined in his own mind to prosecute at all hazards his war against Syria, and hoped to avail himself of the aid of the pious sovereign of Judah, who was then on a visit to his court. Accordingly, at the suggestion of Jehoshaphat, who had been asked to accompany the expedition, the priests of Baal were assembled, ere they set out, to inquire the will of the Lord. These hirelings with one voice favored the wishes of their royal employer, and urged him to proceed, promising him certain and unbounded success. Not content, however, with their encouragement, Jehoshaphat insisted upon the summons of some prophet of the Lord; and Ahab, therefore, sent for Micaiah, whom yet he denounced as one who never prophesied good, but only evil, concerning him.

During the absence of the messenger, the company were entertained by a species of buffoonery on the part of one of the priests, who seems to have put horns of iron on his head, as an emblem of the vigor and strength with which Ahab would pursue and overthrow the Syrians.

Urged by the king's servant to join the other prophets in predicting what would be agreeable, but yet protesting that he would speak only what the Lord should say, the faithful man of God was ushered into the royal presence. Being asked by the king: "Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-Gilead to battle? or shall we forbear?" he answered him, "Go, and prosper; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king."

There was, however, an air of irony about his

manner, as he repeated what the false prophets had previously said, which boded the king no good; and Ahab, therefore, said unto him, "How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord?" In reply to this solemn appeal, the prophet then faithfully foretold the failure of the enterprise, and the utter dispersion of the troop: and then, to still the upbraidings of the king, he rehearsed the vision in which our text is found. "I saw," said the prophet, "the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so."

Such, then, is the record, and such were the circumstances of this remarkable vision; the truthfulness of which was fully proved by the event. Before we attempt to justify the instrumentality here employed by God, it becomes us to inquire, *In what light the vision itself is to be understood?*

Not, then, we maintain, as a view with which the prophet was favored of actual occurrences in the spiritual world. God does not thus sit upon a material throne. Neither do the holy and the fallen angels thus mingle together in his presence. Nor

does he admit into his counsel either good or bad creatures; for he giveth account of his matters unto no one. We are not, then, to consider Micaiah as witnessing a real transaction; but as favored, in vision, with a faithful and striking representation of the invisible means which had been employed to confirm Ahab in his present determination. It is the prophet's description of this emblematic vision which is recorded on the sacred page, and which you have just heard repeated. From it, we gather the unlimited sovereignty of God over all the evil that is in the world. Wicked Ahab and his false prophets, known to be worshippers of another god, are invisibly and mysteriously led into the belief of a lie, and into the adoption of a fatal resolve. Over this whole transaction, God is represented as wonderfully presiding; sitting upon a throne; forming a sovereign purpose, that thus it should be, and then successfully bringing it to pass.

The different wishes, which the good and bad angels had secretly formed in their own breasts, in relation to what they were witnessing in the court of Israel, are described as so many plans which they had proposed to the King of heaven, in a council to which they had been called. God's choice, among them, of the device of an evil spirit to seduce Ahab, through his false prophets, by the confidence and ingenuity with which it desired to inspire them in their unfounded predictions, is represented as his acceptance of a proposition actually made by this individual in the host that stood around. While the secret resolve which God formed to give effect to the aims and efforts of this lying spirit, is spoken of, in the vision, as the

enduing it with a divine commission, and the encouraging it with the promise of success.

We thus see what an innumerable host of agencies God has at his disposal. All the thoughts and purposes of his holy and fallen angels are open to his inspection. Such of them as he disapproves he has the power of preventing and destroying in their very inception; while those which fall in with his own gracious or just plans, he permits, if he do not positively further. These are indeed momentous truths which are so strikingly revealed through this figure; and the reflections to which they lead are scarcely second in importance and difficulty to any that can be suggested.

What comfort should it administer to the devout mind, too ready to be depressed with the apparent upper hand which the wicked have in the world; with what terror should it inspire the heaven-daring, walking by sight and puffed up with the conceit that they have the pre-eminence, to know that the reins of evil are in God's hand; that he hath a bridle in the jaws of sinners causing them to err; that he maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he doth restrain!

But while views like these are thus well-calculated to encourage God's friends and to dishearten his foes, it is yet a question which may be humbly asked, and we think to a disciple's mind satisfactorily answered, *How is the use of such instrumentality consistent with what is declared of God in other parts of his holy word?*

It is from no sympathy with that self-sufficient spirit, which rises up in opposition to every truth that

shows how completely our fallen race is in the just hands of Him against whom it has rebelled, and which is natural to every child of Adam, that we attempt to answer the question here proposed. For such a spirit can never be enlightened or subdued. It should meet only with St. Paul's withering rebuke: "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" What we now design is not to reason with such blasphemers; but to endeavor to instruct the lowly inquirer, who, on reading such a passage in the sacred Scriptures as our text, is perplexed, and sees not how it can be explained in consistence with other obvious truths; who is unable to silence the skeptic, when he urges as an argument against the divine authority and origin of revelation, the fact that it contains statements of this kind, which are contrary to even natural notions of God's benevolence, and contradictory to other doctrines on the professedly sacred page itself; who, above all, is disturbed when, in his own experience or observation, he perceives anything resembling the use of such instrumentality as is here unfolded, on the part of God, and prayerfully seeks to know how facts like these are reconcilable with the holiness of God, with human responsibility, or with the inspired declaration: "Neither tempteth He any man."

Now, it should serve to reconcile the mind of such a disciple to the divine proceeding in the text, if he be led by the Holy Spirit to contemplate the scene of the first temptation and fall, which is so accurately depicted on the sacred page. That Adam and Eve,

under circumstances which called for lasting obedience and gratitude, yielded to the seductions of a lying spirit, and joined him in rebellion against God, is a fact which every child in Christendom knows. That it would have been only a righteous dispensation, if God had for ever given over these two human ingrates to the fellowship and guidance of him whom they had thus chosen to follow, is a position which no scripturally-minded man will be disposed to dispute. Moreover, that our first parents, in the transactions of the garden, were the representatives of the entire human nature, of all their posterity, is a fundamental fact, with which every Christian is well versed. That every child of Adam is born with the same character, and in the same relationship towards God, which the first parents of our race maintained after their fall, is what the Scriptures teach on every page, and what the enlightened believer has been brought to receive in all its length and breadth.

See you not, therefore, that it would be a just thing in God to deliver up every partaker of the fallen human nature to the seductions of the tempter? It would not in the least have impeached his holiness or justice, if God had judicially sentenced Adam and his posterity to all the fatal consequences of that league which they had formed with the deceiver. Though it would have been deplorable to have witnessed the deceived, as they partook, throughout eternity, of the sins and woes of the destroyer, yet the saints in light would have exculpated God, and have cried, "Just and holy are thy ways, O Lord God Almighty!" and

God would only have acted in consistence with his own perfections.

Now, without any reference at this point to the provisions of Gospel grace, we would inquire what, as the Scriptures unfold it, is the actual state of every natural child of Adam, when he is born into the world? Does not the word of God summarily describe unconverted men as "children of the wicked one," and as "of their father, the devil?" Is not "the course of this world" declared by the Holy Ghost to be "according to the prince of the power of the air," who is himself further characterized as "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience?"

So we see, that under the law, and in a state of nature, it is not one man here and there, who, like Ahab, is brought under the seductions of a lying spirit; but all men, everywhere, who, as the Scriptures express it, are under "the power of darkness," and under "the power of Satan." Every unrenewed man is described by St. Paul as one "whose mind the God of this world hath blinded;" he is as effectually led, notwithstanding the light of the Gospel, in utter unbelief, through his earthly pilgrimage, into perdition, as if the eyes of his understanding were literally banded by Satan. Nor can any theoretical or practical unbeliever be scripturally viewed in any other light than as one of the deceived of the devil.

Since all natural men, therefore, are judicially and justly placed under the power of the deceiver, does it not present any modification of the sentence on the part of God, as an act of mere and unmixed mercy, when men, by the restraining grace of God,

are prevented from giving themselves up unreservedly to the temptations of the wicked one, and are kept back from the destruction into which, under his impulse, they would at once plunge, and should it not elicit our gratitude and praise for mercy undeserved? If, therefore, in God's righteous displeasure at any out-breaking and high-handed iniquity, he determine to deliver up any of his fallen human creatures to the full infliction of that curse under which they all justly labor by nature, and to allow a lying spirit to lead their blind souls in full confidence over a destructive precipice, with what feelings should we witness the providence, except with adoring wonder, at the greatness and terribleness of the perfections of him who doeth his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth!

Now, were not Ahab and his corps of false prophets suitable candidates for such an awful judicial visitation? Here was a king, who, with his queen, had set himself up in opposition to the worship of the true God; who had persecuted and slain the people and prophets of the Lord; who surrounded himself with a hierarchy of impostors, which, for the sake of gain, became his servile tools, and hesitated not to announce their patron's wishes and whims as the will and voice of God. Could any dispensation be more righteous than for these hypocritical rebels against God to be overreached in their game of delusion; for a super-human instrument, which their own fallen wickedness had placed at the just disposal of God, to be employed to seduce them into the confident belief of that false-

hood, which they at first announced with a conscious imposture ?

Oh ! with what riveted sureness does the decree of God's justice take effect ! "Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also : go forth, and do so," said God to the lying spirit ; and notwithstanding all the outward means of grace are used to prevent the accomplishment of the judicial prediction ; notwithstanding the veil is taken from the unseen world, and Ahab, through Micaiah, is privileged to behold the spiritual machinery which had been put into operation in order to secure his ruin, yet he shuts his eyes, and rushes blindly on—he meets his foretold death, and his blood is licked by the dogs on the spot where his victim, Naboth, died. Oh ! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !

See you not now, brethren, how justly God can use, according to the scheme of revelation, a kind of instrumentality in furthering his purposes of justice and glory, which mere natural religion and its votaries are ever ready to denounce ? With what feelings of awe, then, should this scriptural view of one of God's rightful methods of governing this fallen world inspire our souls, as we witness much of what is taking place in the present age ! What confidence do the teachers of unscriptural doctrine and their deluded followers often exhibit ! Under what plausible claims of holiness and charity do the preachers of another Gospel maintain their footing and influence in the world ! Notwithstanding the clearest revelations of the truth in those Scriptures which have been written for our

learning, yet they persist in preaching and following with confidence the mere imagination of their heart: "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?"

Is it not, therefore, in accordance with one of the revealed principles of the divine government, that God, through some of those numerous agencies which, by the Fall, have been placed at his just disposal, should send such preachers and their congregations "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness?"

Nor is the fearful truth to which we have been attending confined in its application to the preaching and hearing of God's professed word, but it extends also to private life; and in our entire course through the world, or in some one essential particular, it may be only through judicial blindness, with which our self-will and iniquity have been cursed, that we verily think we are doing God service; whereas, if, in the appointed way, through the written word, we tried the spirit that was in us, it would prove to be not of God, but only one that had been sent for our punishment with the fatal commission: "Thou shalt persuade him and prevail also: go forth, and do so."

Two reflections will bring us to a close. And, first, our subject shows *the great grace of God in appointing his Son, Jesus Christ, as the Redeemer of our souls.* How abased and fearful, as disclosed by our discourse, is the natural relationship in which we stand to God! Leagued with fallen angels in rebellion against him to

whom we owe our life, and breath, and all things! Delivered over by an irreversibly just decree to the prevailing seductions of the deceiver! An host of lying spirits, waiting for the righteous permission of an offended God, to blind and lead us on to any prescribed wickedness or ruin! Such was our subjection to fallen angels, when, in the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son, not to take upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham; and he who knew no sin was made sin for us, had the guilt of our league with devils imputed to himself, and bore its curse. Triumpling in his cross over those principalities and powers by which we had been enslaved, and making a show of them openly; he, through death, overcame him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and delivered them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Jesus hath become the propitiation for our sins, and hath rendered it just for God to deliver us from the power of darkness, and to translate us into the kingdom of his dear Son. Even those among men who shall finally be lost, enjoy the benefits upon earth of that restraining grace which the Redeemer has purchased for all: they are shielded from the unchecked exercise of the deceiver's powers; they are vouchsafed the warnings of God's law, and the light and invitations of Christ's Gospel: they are on earth as the prisoners of hope, instead of being in hell, the tenants of despair.

And as for those who lay hold upon the hope set before them in the Gospel, Jesus turns them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and in-

heritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in him. Oh! what a change is wrought in the character, and condition, and prospects of Christ's redeemed! From being the children of the wicked one, they become the children and heirs of God! From being possessed with the spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience, they have their fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. From the anticipation of being cast into the lake of fire,—which is the second death,—with the devil and his deceived, they have become heirs, through hope, of everlasting life! And when they awake up, satisfied in the likeness of Christ; when they have come to Jesus, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to an innumerable company of angels; when from such holy fellowship they look down with Abraham and Lazarus into hell, they will, in its fullness, experience the amount of their indebtedness to him who hath redeemed them from that unreserved companionship with devils and the damned to which they might have been justly doomed.

But, lastly, we may derive from our subject, *the most important practical lessons to regulate our feelings and daily course.* Brethren, if we are all by nature under the power of darkness, it is yet only the Ahabs, who, by their proud and wicked lives, provoke God to confer an effective commission upon a lying spirit, to go forth and persuade them unto some sin which is unto death. How softly, then, should we walk before the Lord! keeping, by faith, constantly and carefully in view the unseen things which Micaiah's vision reveals! recognizing, in our fallen state and practical wickedness, the justice of God's employing, if he see

fit, the terrible spiritual agencies which are at his disposal for our destruction! improving every means of grace, and abstaining from all known sin, lest some lying spirit be directed to persuade us, and prevail also! How honestly and duly should we feel and confess the guilt of our sin; beseeching the Lord not to be strict to mark iniquity; but to forgive it for Jesus' sake!"

Nor should the light of our subject permit any of us to rest, until we are safely housed in Jesus' side; until, through the Mediator, we have entered into that better covenant with God, which is ordered in all things, and sure; until the power of Christ rest upon us, and we find his grace sufficient to shield us even from the messenger of Satan, which may be sent to buffet us withal! Nor, brethren in Christ, have even we so triumphed that our warfare may be pronounced as at an end. It is said of us, on the contrary, that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world. It is only, above all, by keeping the shield of faith, that we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. It is such as we whom our apostle encourages with the assurance that the God of peace shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly; such as we, whom another apostle warns, that the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, and for whom he prays that the God of all grace, after we have suffered for awhile, may make us perfect, establish, strengthen, settle us. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

## SERMON IX.

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### NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL REMEDIES FOR DARKNESS.

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Isaiah l. 10, 11.

“WHO IS AMONG YOU THAT FEARETH THE LORD, THAT OBEYETH THE VOICE OF HIS SERVANT, THAT WALKETH IN DARKNESS, AND HATH NO LIGHT? LET HIM TRUST IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, AND STAY UPON HIS GOD. BEHOLD, ALL YE THAT KINDLE A FIRE, THAT COMPASS YOURSELVES ABOUT WITH SPARKS; WALK IN THE LIGHT OF YOUR FIRE, AND IN THE SPARKS THAT YE HAVE KINDLED. THIS SHALL YE HAVE OF MINE HAND; YE SHALL LIE DOWN IN SORROW.”

WHEN viewed as a symbolic lesson, what a fearfully interesting picture was presented to the eye of our prophet in the text! It was dark night; rendered gloomy by some actual or threatening storm. The worst apprehensions might well fill the breasts of those who were exposed, without shelter, to the fury of the gathering tempest—and many such there were—for the prophet was sensible of their presence, although he could not distinguish them. Driven, however, by the desperation of their circumstances, to devise some plan for their relief, most of this benighted and terrified company begin to kindle a fire, on which they pile up all the fuel within their reach, so that it burns freely and brightly, and scatters its sparks far and wide. Under the soothing and cheering influence of this factitious heat and blaze, those who had been,

and still should be struck with terror, at once dismiss all fear, and begin to occupy and amuse themselves with whatever comes to hand. Suddenly, however, the storm bursts, and descends—the fire is extinguished—darkness again shrouds the scene—and the revellers lie down in wretchedness, and give vent to their despair in the most heart-rending cries.

Such is the vivid, but sad representation suggested to our minds, by the message which Isaiah is commissioned to deliver in the concluding portion of our text: “Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.” In the meanwhile, however, scattered here and there, throughout that large assemblage, with little or no possibility of co-operation with each other, and standing almost alone, so that they had to be addressed, you will note, not collectively, but individually, were some who revered and served that great and dreadful Being from whose hidden, but exhaustless stores the overwhelming deluge had been gathered. These, too, during the impending storm, “walked in darkness, and had no light.” But they utterly refused to join in building a fire with the decayed creature wood, which lay around. In their sight, the light which it threw upon the scene was of a lurid hue, betraying its dismal and transient character. They closed their eyes upon it, and, while exposed to the dark, tempestuous night, they derived their sole confidence and support from leaning on an unseen arm; which, they felt assured, would supply them with a

covert in the approaching extremity. Isaiah was most anxious to comfort and cheer these patient and faithful servants of his divine Master, in this period of their trial; and therefore, from the depths of the surrounding gloom, he addresses and exhorts them first: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

Such, then, is the striking representation of our text; and how much does it teach us, on the one hand, of *the natural condition, and efforts, and hopes, and ends of fallen man*; and, on the other, of *the present trials, and duties, and final security of those who fear God, and follow his elect servant, Jesus Christ!*

To a brief survey of these important points we now invite you, depending upon the Spirit of God to apply it profitably to our souls. And first, *How dark and threatening is our natural condition*, as depicted in the text! Nor can any scripturally-minded or experienced hearer doubt the truthfulness of the representation. How impenetrable is the spiritual gloom! "God," we are told, "is light; and in him is no darkness at all;" but he withdrew and hid himself from his human creatures at their fall; and now, "who by searching, can find him out?" By nature, there is a darkness resting both *on* us, and *in* us.

The heathen, who are in a merely natural state, without any revelation, suffer from want both of the outward and the inward light. It is spiritual night with them, because they are without that "word" which the Psalmist said "was a lamp unto his feet,

and a light unto his path." Hence it is, that, when our Lord came and preached the Gospel, it is declared, that "the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up." And again: "The light shineth in darkness."

How fully, how obviously are these, and numerous like assertions of the Scripture, sustained by what is known of the heathen world! Have Christian navigators or travellers reported that they have met in unevangelized lands with anything but deep, universal, spiritual night? Has any heathen been found walking in the light, doing the will of God, and enjoying communion with him? Has any of them been able to understand the ways of Providence, or the end of their own existence? Have they not universally proved themselves to be, by their deeds, the children of the wicked one, and, by their opinions, to be under the teaching of the father of lies? The Sun of righteousness set upon those regions at the Fall, nor has he ever risen again; and it is yet with them spiritual night.

Nor can any abiding and satisfactory relief to this universal darkness be found by the enlightened, we had almost said the honest inquirer, even though he search the records of the civilized heathen communities of antiquity. Many civil and moral truths, necessary to their temporal welfare, were known and operating among the Romans and the Greeks. But these affected not the spiritual relations in which they stood to the true God. Their sages sometimes ventured to guess or point out the destiny of man; but,

at best, these were uncertain and erroneous conjectures, leaving no settled convictions on their own minds, and exerting no abiding and paramount influence on their lives. Such statements can at best be compared to meteors, which sometimes shoot across the horizon at midnight, and serve only to make the surrounding darkness visible. It is, then, and always has been with men, in their purely natural and fallen state, just such a time of darkness, in which there is no light, as surrounded the prophet when he spake in our text.

In what now, we ask, do men who have been born and bred in Christian lands, but whose natures are not changed—who have never been subject to any gracious operation of the Spirit of God upon their souls—spiritually differ from those who have always lived on heathen shores? We answer, Just as blind men in the day differ from blind men at night. Is this comparison too strong? Is it unfounded? The Psalmist, with the book of Revelation in his hand, feels his need of divine help to bestow sight; and prays: “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” And St. Paul speaks of the vanity of those men’s minds who are in their native state, “having the understanding darkened—being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” And again, the same apostle declares, that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither *can* he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Here, then, in so many words, and in other equally

strong and varied expressions, men by nature are declared to be blind, and unable to know and receive the things of God. Of what avail, then, the different circumstances in which natural men are placed in Christian and heathen countries? Even though they were translated to heaven, they would not, in the midst of its light, be able to see. Therefore it is, that in effect, unconverted men in the United States are spiritually as much in the dark as those who have never left the Feejee islands. Oh! what an impenetrable and painful mystery are the mind and ways of God—the origin, and course, and objects of his own life—to the most gifted natural man in our Gospel land! He may say things, even on this subject, which have a great show of wisdom, and which may exalt him in the eyes of the spiritually blind; but when the whole is scrutinized, it will prove to be either uncertain or vain: and when the question recurs to his mind, To what am I tending? all is shrouded in the blackness of darkness.

The blind man is always in the dark, even under the beams of the meridian sun. Hence it is that our prophet is authorized, in viewing natural men—all who do not obey Jesus Christ, whether they be Gentiles or Jews, in heathen or Christian lands—as living in the shades of night; having no light, except, indeed, that which shines from the fire made by themselves. It is, moreover, a most stormy and terrific night, which they are passing under the open sky. They are homeless prodigals, who have deserted their Almighty Father's house. Nor is their Father one who will ever suffer his just authority to be trampled upon or

evaded with impunity. The very darkness in which they are now shrouded, is part of that curse with which he has pursued the wanderers.

Oh! how clear are both the light and vision of the unfallen and holy children of the Most High. All who dwell in the mansions of his upper house, see eye to eye, and know even as they are known. But spiritual night has settled upon all who have been driven from his presence and the glory of his power. What gloomy forebodings, too, should possess the minds of these benighted exiles from a Father's house. Unless they had sunk to the level of spiritual swine, would they be content with those husks which are the best that even the most favored of their company eat?

Many, on that narrow neck of land betwixt two unbounded seas to which they have been driven, have sunk into some miry pit of wretchedness and want, and groan under the combined evils of darkness, and destitution, and distress. How empty and vain, too, are the portions of those whose lines seem to have fallen in more pleasant places! Nothing really satisfies. The future cannot be read. No Providence is understood; of nothing are they assured; on the present alone can they depend. If they would only reflect, and look around, they would be convinced that destruction is gathering, and will soon, as an avalanche, descend on them and all that they hold dear. Clouds, deep and black, are over their heads; bolts strike down, ever and anon, acquaintances and friends and relatives, on either hand. A voice which says,

“Thou, too, shalt die,” is sounded almost daily in the ears of each.

Such, then, is the dark and threatening condition of fallen man. *To what, now, under these terrific circumstances, do they betake themselves?* Our prophet assures us in the text, that they “kindle a fire, and compass themselves about with sparks, and they walk in the light of their fire, and in the sparks that they have kindled.” Nor can these figurative expressions be misunderstood. They plainly teach, that unconverted men discard all proper reflections on their awful spiritual state, and, by all the means within their own reach, they endeavor to light up and render comfortable and pleasant their dark and dreary condition. Each busily collects all the wood and coal upon which he can lay his hand, and then faithfully brings his offering and throws it upon the kindled pile, that the fire may burn and blaze. How learnedly do many of them talk about the progress in knowledge and art of all preceding generations! How extensive is their information of all that is doing and intended at the present time! What prospects of improvement do some of them hold out in the future! There is nothing too absurd to be eloquently discoursed about; and whether an appeal be made to the hopes or the fears of those who hear, it is yet adroitly managed to minister to their own flattery, or to foster the ambition of their fellow-men. Even the most sacred themes are handled in the same irreverent manner, and for the same blasphemous ends. Of all, however, it is written, “The world by wisdom knew not God,” and “The wisdom of man is foolishness with God:” yet it all emits sparks, with

which men are pleased, and in the light of which they walk.

Again, to many of them power is given to get wealth. How busily engrossed are most of them in acquiring fortunes; in laying up for themselves, or their children, earthly treasure. What magic, too, do riches seem to possess! By the mere waive of their wand, they convert the wilderness into a garden; they level mountains, elevate plains, change the bed and course of rivers. Governments, or rich corporations, excite by their achievements the wonder of the world; and in their private spheres, how enviable do the wealthy generally appear! What palaces they build—by what comforts and luxuries are they surrounded—though living in a world cursed for their sakes, yet they neither lie, nor sit down, nor rise up, nor walk without coming in contact with something which contributes to their happiness or ease.

And, although “man being in honor abideth not, but is like the beasts which perish, yet their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names.” Thus they compass themselves about with sparks, and walk in the light of their fire.

How many votaries of pleasure, too, are there in this fallen world, almost recklessly doing what they list! Some delight in furnishing their tables with the best which the folds, or the fields, or the seas produce. Others only feel themselves at home, when moving in gay circles; while balls, and theatres, and cards dissipate the minds and time of a giddy throng. “Who

will tell us any new thing?" "Who will show us any good?" are the insatiable cries of the Athenians and fashionists of every succeeding generation. Thus many rejoice, and walk in the ways of their heart and in the sight of their eyes; without reflecting that for all these things God will bring them into judgment. How brilliant, and often envied in the eyes of their fellow-men, is the course of those who compass themselves about with sparks like these!

But we may not dwell; for it would be endless to attempt the description of that confused and noisy work, which, with differing languages, the fallen nations of the earth have never ceased to contribute towards the erection of a Babel—some tower of human strength, in which men can afford to forget God, or set at defiance his arm.

However selfish and low, and varied, too, the feelings and aims of each in this busy mart are known to be, yet in the point of ungodliness all agree. Here hand joins in hand; and to the eye of sense it seems as though the multitude had the pre-eminence. Each says in his heart, "There is no God," and in their midst, faithful prophets of the Most High, are in such an age as this despised. In other ages, many of God's servants have barely escaped with their lives, while not a few have actually fallen a sacrifice. Such, then, are the fire and sparks which the children of this world kindle, and in the light of which they walk.

Would it not be all but useless to speculate, now, on *the hopes* of characters like these? For to what can they be more truthfully compared than to a company of maniacs, who, in some dark night, should

build a fire on the slippery brink of a destructive precipice, and heedlessly rise up in its light to play?

There is scarcely a breast, in all whom Isaiah beheld with his prophetic eye, and in all whom we see day by day, which is swayed by any supreme and abiding motive. Beyond the immediate present object most of them feel no necessity or inclination to aim. Their minds are a lodge of vain thoughts in endless succession. Their desires are chiefly of a negative character. Most of them do not aspire after much more than barely to kill time. Seldom, indeed, are they at all far-reaching. The very desperation of their circumstances renders it necessary for them to dismiss all reflection; and if in this they succeed, they feel themselves to be their own debtors to a great degree.

Here and there in that vast crowd will be discovered some master mind, who manages not only to divest himself of all sense of responsibility to God, but who sets his eye fixedly on some earthly goal, and becomes absorbed with some positive worldly good. But even such a one aims at nothing beyond the horizon of time. He is at best earthly and sensual; and what shall become of his hope when God taketh away his soul—when he goes out of the world as naked as he entered it, and knoweth not who shall gather what he has left behind?

This leads us to ask *What shall the end be* of the men who thus kindle a fire and compass themselves about with sparks? They are addressed by God's sure word in our text, "This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." Oh! as under the mighty hand of God, they lie down on the bed of

death, and their eyes are about to close forever on that fire which they kindled, and in the light of which they walked through the whole journey of life—their vision is in some manner cleared; the very light which had been in them they are now ready to acknowledge was darkness! Let us, indeed, never forget that it is written of the death of the wicked, that “there are no bands in it.” For it is frequently evident to observation that it is even so; and if we suppose that Scripture authorizes any other expectation, we may be disappointed and almost tempted to doubt. Many, many of the surviving wicked are encouraged to live on in sin, when they see how calmly their former companions leave the world. For the most part, then, the wicked die even as they lived, with little or no forebodings of judgment. To the ministerial or Christian friend, who holds up Christ crucified as once the hope and salvation of the dying thief, and who inquires if they have a like trust; with little or no power of resistance, they return an affirmative reply, and sink into the arms of death as if into their usual sleep.

Far be it from us to rob the surviving of the hope which Providence thus furnishes; and never should the sovereignty of God’s grace be limited. Still, fears must be mingled with hopes in every case like this. And it should be remembered, that it is not in this world, even though it be in the last moments of one’s pilgrimage, that the spirits of the ungodly are surrendered into the hands of Him who taketh vengeance. This only begins, when the wicked stand before His judgment seat—when the curse is pronounced—when the fire and sparks which they kindled in this world

have actually gone out, and they are cast into outer darkness, where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. It is then, that what was threatened of God's hand is fulfilled, and they lie down in sorrow—that sorrow which is everlasting and which is without mitigation or hope. Such, brethren, is the fearful issue of all those remedies which fallen men devise against the evils to which flesh is heir.

But, briefly, in conclusion, we must not forget, that there were others upon whom the shades of our prophet's night had settled, but whom he yet addresses in more encouraging tones. "Who is there," he cries out, among you all, now exposed in a tempestuous night, the darkness of which may be felt, "who feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant?" Isaiah's meaning here may be better understood if we paraphrase it thus:—"I address myself to such of you as have that filial fear of offending the Lord, which springs from the assurance that your sins have been graciously forgiven by him; to such of you as implicitly trust in and obey his elect servant and only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. It is true you are now walking in darkness, and have no light. You are not exempt from the temporal trouble in which the unrighteous are involved. Nay, for the trial of your faith, your afflictions are even more numerous and heavy than theirs. You have no light in your darkness. It may be you have scarcely any outward tokens of God's love and care—none, at least, for which the mere natural heart would be thankful.—Nor are you relieved by the light of that fire which your fallen fellow-creatures build. In it, with faithful

steadfastness towards God, you utterly refuse to walk, upon it you determinately shut your eyes."

Nay, my brethren, the prophet may have meant more than this. For, if in such a temporal night, the disciples of Jesus Christ only enjoy spiritual light; if the candle of the Lord shine upon them as it did once upon Job, in similar circumstances, like the patient patriarch, they may joyously pass through such darkness with this light. But the prophet describes them as walking in darkness, and having no light. Those, then, whom our prophet addressed, were in the condition of Job, when he was denied the light and help which God's sensible presence and guidance would have afforded him: and when he cried out in agonizing desire for its being conferred again, "Oh! that it were with me as in months that are past." It was with them a period, not only of temporal affliction, but of inward and spiritual darkness. God had hidden himself, and could no where be found.

While, then, these disciples of Jesus Christ are standing still and quietly waiting in the midst of their outward and inward darkness, our prophet, in the text, exhorts each of them, "Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Nor was this a prescription which in their trouble they despised. "They that know thy name," saith the psalmist, "will put their trust in thee:" and it was because these knew the name of the Lord, that Isaiah is encouraged to urge them to place their trust in it. Ere this, the Lord hath passed before them, in their own personal experience, and proclaimed his name, as he did before Moses in the rock, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful

and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin." With what a foretaste of heaven did that personal fellowship with God fill their souls! Now their sky is overcast, and their soul is troubled. But they know that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; that he is the Lord, who changeth not; a great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments. Therefore they could not but trust in his name, although no outward token of his love and faithfulness was then vouchsafed; and although they would have exclaimed in despair, if listening to the voice of sense, "There is no hope; this evil is from the Lord; wherefore should we wait?"

Moreover, our prophet's language teaches us, that each of them might have been assured that he had a personal property in God. Therefore it is that he calls upon each of them in this extremity to stay himself upon his God. Yea, even though he had at that present moment only the bare word of God upon which to rely, yet each was convinced that God was not a man, that he should lie; and he therefore supported himself by this sure promise; he strengthened himself to bear, and waited quietly until he saw the salvation of God. Underneath and behind their patient endurance, brethren, there was a calm and unshaken conviction that all would yet be well—a conviction, which, although for the present it could not be called joyous, not one of these afflicted believers would yet have been deprived

of for worlds; and in comparison with which, the laughter of those who were walking in the light of the fire which they had kindled, was like the crackling thorns under a pot, when contrasted with the full and steady beams of the meridian sun. Even if their spiritual sense enjoyed not the presence of God, yet their judgment saw him who was invisible. Nor was this judgment altogether without some saving hope. For truly each of the righteous may say with David, "Thou *will* light my candle; the Lord my God *will* enlighten my darkness."

If such, too, brethren, be the difference between the lamps of the wise virgins, when contrasted under the least favorable circumstances with those of the foolish, while both are burning in this world, Oh! what a contrast exists, when the candle of the wicked is put out, and he lies down in sorrow! While the one is cast into outer darkness, the other is translated into the glorious presence of God. It may with all truth be said of those who fear God and obey Jesus Christ, that the period of their darkest trials on earth was that seed time, in which light was sown for them, and joyful gladness. In the world to come they reap the full harvest. They are taken where there shall be no night; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light.

We join, therefore, with our prophet, in encouraging those of you, brethren, who fear the Lord, and obey Jesus Christ, to trust in the name of the Lord and to stay upon your God, whenever you walk in darkness and have no light. We would also ask such of you, my hearers, as walk in the light of your own fire,

and of the sparks which you have kindled, this inspired question: "If," as you cannot now but see, "the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" We would faithfully urge you hastily and effectually to put out your fire; and with the fixed purpose only to see light in God's light, to begin to pray to God to manifest himself to you as he is in Christ, and to arise and shine upon you that you may have peace and salvation.



## SERMON X.

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### HATRED TO GOD OF THE UNRENEWED HEART.

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Rom. viii. 7.

“THE CARNAL MIND IS ENMITY AGAINST GOD.”

It is no wonder the sinner knows not that he hates his God. God is too good to be hated. And none do like to feel themselves so vile as to hate the good and perfect God. God is too benevolent to be hated. “From him cometh every good and perfect gift;” and it would not do to know that such love is returned with hate. God is too powerful to hate. “Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth; but woe be to the man who striveth with his Maker.” It would cause despair and dread in man to know that there was in him irreconcilable hatred against Almighty God.

On these and such like accounts, sin perceiveth that its dwelling and dominion in the human heart would not be entire and undisputed, if its real nature,—hatred to God—were known, and therefore exerteth all its inconceivable cunning to persuade the soul it is at peace with God. Yet notwithstanding all this, and more, “the carnal mind is enmity against God.” What

is the carnal mind? It means, and might more literally be rendered, the minding of the flesh,—the loving and following the dictates of the flesh. What is the flesh? We stop not to inquire how it came to be thus used; but are satisfied to know that its very common Scripture sense is,—the each and every bias of the man to forbidden things,—the corruption of our nature,—our every motion, whether spiritual, mental, or corporeal, whether originating within us, or only according with some outward suggestion of the Devil and the world, which is contrary to the holiness and claims of God. The minding of this thing—the flesh,—this carnal mind is enmity against God.

Now, dear brethren, there is not one of us who is wholly exempt from the indwelling of this self-same flesh, this enmity against God. The sacred Scriptures know but two classes here and everywhere, those who have been born again, and thus have become the children of God; and those who are unrenewed, and are not the adopted and covenant heirs of God. The former through grace have become the tabernacles of the Spirit of Christ. Now even in such of you, beloved hearers, as are members of the household of faith, according to your different degrees of sanctification, there is less or more of the flesh, or enmity against God. Though the mind and affections be enlightened from above,—though the Holy Ghost dwell within,—yet the flesh, weakened it is true, but still awfully strong, remains. And in you, that is in your flesh, dwelleth no good thing: and though with the mind you serve the law of God, yet with the flesh the law of sin: and the flesh lusteth against the Spirit,

and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other.

It is not our object now to dwell on this mighty struggle in the Christian's soul; nor to open how God may and doth adopt and love him who hath still within him enmity to his glory and his ways; nor to show the mode in which God will overcome and exile this horrible enmity, and make his child meet for his holy presence. It must suffice us for this present as regards these things, to know that in our blessed Jesus lies hid this mystery of God. And our purpose in alluding to the Christian's unsubdued remaining flesh, or enmity to God, was two-fold.

First, to remind him of the necessity of charity, while we unfold the nature of the carnal mind, because the leaven still exists within himself.

Secondly, to show the unrenewed, that the Christian mourns over his own continued partial subjection to the carnal mind, rather than with unfeeling forgetfulness of the rock whence he was hewn, denounces him: thus striving to remove a prejudice against the minister of Christ, which will extend itself to what he says, while he proclaims the unpalatable truth, that the carnal mind is enmity against God.

The main difference, as regards the point in hand, between those who are born of God, and you impenitent and unrenewed, that we hold and set forth, is that, through the grace of God given for the merits of Jesus, the new born soul for the most part, doth not, with its heart and mind assent to the promptings and workings of the flesh, but that you do. Here is no boasting then; it is excluded. The Christian doth

not magnify himself when he saith that in you and all who have not been born again, there is the carnal mind, and that this carnal mind is enmity against God. But while we disown all self-praise, and condemn ourselves with you, still your sin is none the less culpable because told you by a fellow-culprit. The impenitent thief was no less guilty because he was told by his fellow-thief on the other side of Jesus, that he was justly suffering his present punishment. We say then impenitent friend, in you is the carnal mind. "That which is born of the flesh," saith Jesus, "is flesh." It continueth flesh until it be born of the Spirit. The flesh doth exercise uncontrolled dominion in some way or other, until the soul be born again. There may be, and there is, within the unrenewed, resistance from the natural conscience and the voice and providence of God to the desires and devices of the flesh, and this resistance hath its effect,—it produceth fear, and leadeth to many acts of outward service and obedience to God,—but it never hath the cordial approval, co-operation and delight of his inward man. And until this be gained, there is no saving change; there is no triumph of the Spirit over the flesh; the soul hath not been born again. All acts and feelings which stop short of this new birth—this radical change, are but wicked artifices of the flesh,—which by its seeming yielding doth silence conscience, lull and blind the soul. And notwithstanding these, nay, on account of them, what Jesus saith doth remain an uncontradicted unqualified truth, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh."

And, again, St. Paul, notwithstanding the fearful

remainders of the carnal mind in every Christian soul, doth draw a distinction between the present state of himself and of the brethren at Rome, and the past, when they "were in the flesh." It is most scriptural then to say to you, beloved, who are not born of the Spirit of God, that ye are in the flesh, that you have a carnal mind. But the Scripture further saith, "the carnal mind is enmity against God." This is the declaration of the Holy Ghost. It may not be gainsayed by any but the infidel. Oh! ye who say, that ye believe the Scripture is the word of God, and who yet profess not to be born again, that word doth say, your mind is enmity against God. Hear the Spirit when he speaks, and calls you the enemy of God. Believe and tremble, too, while you hear. For if the king, in the Scripture parable, who had ten thousand, could not meet him who came against him with twenty thousand, and wisely sent an embassy of peace; be reconciled to this thy mighty adversary whilst thou art in the way with him, lest he deliver thee to prison.

And oh! should a rebellious son who has wronged a tender and forbearing parent, throw himself upon his injured father's neck, nay, at his feet, if so be, there might be reconciliation: and is not God a father? Is he not loving to thee, man? The mother may forget her sucking child, but he hath not forgotten thee. And he saith unto his enemy, Son, daughter, give me thine heart.

But what return doth this appeal meet with from the carnal mind? It maketh God a liar; for it denies the charge. It showeth all it does, and vaunteth of its works. It mentioneth its tithes, and telleth of its

prayers. "Wherein have I robbed thee?" it saith. Have I not built thee an house? Do I not worship thee therein? Humble I not myself before thee daily on my knees? With thy people I fast and afflict myself; with the Church I rejoice and feast; I wrong no man; with my goods I feed the poor; and if that be not enough, I will give my body to be burned: "wherein have I robbed thee?" "But to what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?" saith the Lord, "I am full of them. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? The Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with: it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Make you a new heart. Son, daughter, give me thy heart. The carnal mind is enmity against God."

But, beloved, do you hesitate to own the truth that *your* carnal mind is enmity against God? Do you still make mention of your frequent acknowledgment of God in all your ways, the reverence you feel and show to him, to his law, and to his worship? And do you still rest in these to prove that you are not the enemy of God? It strikes me there is much of truth in what you say. You are not the enemy of *your* God.

But alas! alas! the deceitful flesh, the carnal mind—in order to make you quiet in its service—hath built a god, which is no god, and given him to you to worship and to serve. And to make its fetters of delusion strong, calls him the God of the Bible; and persuades you to call and worship him as such. But the flesh deceives; it is not the God of the Bible,—for he saith the carnal mind is enmity against God.

Oh! be persuaded, then, the flesh doth lie; own yourself the enemy of God; forthwith be reconciled. He hath ascended up on high, and led captivity captive; and received gifts for thee, pardon and salvation through his name. Go, reason then with him, for he calls, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Harken, while I endeavor to disclose this fatal deceit of the flesh, whereby you have been persuaded that you are at peace, while you are at enmity with God.

The way in which the carnal mind hath induced you to believe that it was well with thee and God, is by lowering in thy conceptions his nature and his claims so as to suit thy sinful views, thy feelings of self-sufficiency, all thy loved indulgences, and thy withholding of the service of the heart. Now hear what the true and Bible God does, and what he demands; how he views thee, and the only terms on which he will pardon and accept thy soul, and say if your carnal mind is not enmity to him.

Look, then, at what he does. He permitteth none to do what will not praise him; for, the remainder he doth restrain. He bringeth all to pass. "Is there evil in the city and he hath not done it?" He saith, "I create evil." He considereth his own wisdom the best, and maketh it the only guide. He locketh up his purpose in mystery, and opens and reveals it just when and how it pleaseth him. He doeth "his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." Nothing is too great or small to escape his governance. "He is the ruler among the nations;"

and he numbereth the hairs. "I, the Lord, do all these things."

Now, beloved, it thus appears that every event which hath happened to thee; every circumstance and condition in which you have been placed; every relation in which you stand to men and things, have been ordered, brought about by God. Now, have you delighted yourself in these as they occurred? You have been much and often blessed. Have you received these good and perfect gifts of God with due, heartfelt, delighted acknowledgment of his hand, and thanks unto his name? Hath this, your habit of acknowledgment, been so glad, that it hath been un-deviating,—a thing of course? Or, have you not dethroned the Bible-God, exalted self, and looked to thy right hand? Or, with thoughtless and unthankful sensuality indulged thy wishes and thy appetites,—forgetful of the Father of light? Here then thy carnal mind doth rob the Bible-God, and show its bitter enmity to him.

But, it may be, you have been sometimes crossed. In property you have sustained some loss. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be his name." In your plans you have failed: "Not my will, but thine be done." You have been injured too; but with wicked hands, these men have only done what the Lord had purposed, foreordained: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." Have you thus honored God in all your ways? or did you not forthwith, without dependence, seek and devise some means to reinstate thyself, to alter and amend thy plan, or else sorrow as one "without hope,

without God?" Did you not hate your enemy; and if stayed from abuse and revenge, was it not from other motives than because the Bible-God had said vengeance was his, and had enjoined thee to forgive and love? Oh! it is only a carnally-conceived and flesh-made God you worship. It is one which is no God, and suffers thee to sit upon the throne thyself. It is one which is content with nominal and outward homage, and permits thee to serve another king—thyself. In your heart you have dethroned the Bible-God, and taken his sceptre in thy hands; and doth he make a false charge when he saith, "Your carnal mind is enmity against God?"

But again, beloved, look at *his demands, his law*. We have previously insisted somewhat on this; we will now, then, be brief. Not only as governor, but as lawgiver, you displace the Bible-God, and in his stead put an imaginary creature of thine own, which is weak and foolish, and permitteth thee to make and construe thine own laws. You have great contempt for him; thinking him to be satisfied with lip-service and the obedience of the outward man. You sometimes even come short in the homage that you acknowledge you should pay to him. It is easy to glide from low views of his spirituality to degrading conceptions of his strictness and his power. Tush! he doth not regard. Oh! where will the end be, if not in a practically atheistic creed? Surely, the carnal mind is enmity against the Bible-God.

But, finally, beloved, look at his views of thee, and the only ground of pardon and acceptance he provides. Judge, then, of his views of thee by his treatment of

the blessed Christ, who loved and gave himself for thee. See there thy substitute. God leadeth him into the garden; he poureth the vials of his wrath on him; he putteth him in trouble, agony, and bloody sweat; he maketh him to be deserted, betrayed, denied by friends; he hideth the favor of his face; he delivereth him into the hands of murderous foes; he causeth them to scourge and spit upon him; he putteth a cross upon his shoulder, and carrieth him unto the mount; he nails him by his hands and feet; he makes him bow his head and die; he runneth a spear into his dead side. And now he bringeth thee to the accursed tree, and showeth thee what he hath done with Christ, because he placed him in thy stead, and requireth thee to own the justice of the deed. Dost thou feel and say, "Just and holy are thy ways, O God?" Or doth the carnal mind now show itself to be enmity against the Bible-God?

But further; he commands thee to believe in Jesus, lifted up, and doth denounce and threaten thus: "He that believeth not, shall be damned." He tells thee, renounce utterly all hope, and trust in self. Rely on Jesus' obedience unto death for pardon and acceptance with offended God. Make mention of no name but his. Receive him as thy king; love and strive to follow his spiritual commands; seek and obtain his Spirit to resist and triumph over thy carnal mind.

There remaineth but another way to show thy hatred unto God; but we will here rest the proof of its existence and its strength, and use that other way rather to break down the enmity of thy carnal mind. We leave the proof, then, with God's command to thee

to believe in Jesus Christ. Dost thou refuse? Then there is within thee enmity to God.

And now, if you resist this last appeal, let your resistance prove to you, when you retire hence—doubt not throughout future life—the truth, that the carnal mind is enmity against God. For lo! thy God doth lay aside his majesty: he supplicates and he entreats; as a friend, he teaches, warns, and pleads. He bids his minister before you, search the Scriptures, know his will—then sends me to thee with a friendly, persevering violence, to instruct, invite, expostulate, alarm. Now, then, as an ambassador for Christ, “as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” Your “carnal mind is enmity against God.” And oh! beloved, it is not meet or right to hate so good a God, who made and gave thee all thou art and hast. It is perverse longer to hate the Bible-God, who showeth mercy to unrighteousness; who gave his Son to death, that, in Christ’s flesh, he might abolish the enmity, so making peace; that he might reconcile you to himself by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. He preacheth peace to you which are afar off.

Now, therefore, be no more a stranger and foreigner, but a fellow-citizen “with the saints, and of the household of God.” Oh! beloved, though God might not clear the guilty, yet to justify thee, he seizeth on his Christ, and doth punish thee in him. Then, let the love which spared not his own Son, but gave him up for thee, subdue thine enmity to God.

But let me further say: “To be carnally minded is death.” Enmity to God is death. It is spiritual

death in this present evil world. God doth not reveal himself unto his enemy. The carnal mind discerneth not the things of God. It knoweth not his will. His will is foolishness to it. Its eyes are blinded; its ears are stopped; its understanding darkened. It cannot please God, neither is it pleased with him. It doth not possess and enjoy God. It saith unto God, Depart; I desire not the knowledge of thy ways. It hath not Christ, who only is the life. The carnal mind, while it liveth, is yet accounted dead before God. Christ is hid in God; and in this only life the carnal mind hath neither lot nor part. It is without a living hope, without a living God. Oh! sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, by the might and grace of Jesus, slay this carnal mind, this enmity to God.

But, further, to be carnally-minded is not only present spiritual death, but it is the beginning, and will insure the perpetuity of the second death. In pitying, saving love to thee, God doth tolerate, for a brief space, thy carnal mind, that his forbearance may lead thee to renounce this enmity to him. But the time cometh when he will visit with recompense his foes; when the economy of grace shall close, and judgment take the mercy-seat. Oh! enemy of God, be reconciled; for thou mayest not stand his Almighty, burning, never-ending wrath.

Thou seest now, O man! thine enmity to God; that thou dost virtually dethrone the king and Lord of all, and that you and God are foes. Thou seest further how sinful and unwise is enmity to God; that it is death. Still dost thou find the carnal mind too strong? Will it not permit thee to delight thyself in

God? And do you ask, How may I escape the wrath to come? What must I do? You are in the condition of the servant which owes ten thousand talents, and hath not wherewithal to pay. All that you have, nay your very self, is God's. You may not, then, give him what you have to purchase peace, for that is already his. Surely there can be nothing *within* thee to commend thee to his love; for there is within thee enmity to him. Thine only hope is then nowhere out of God, but lies hid in God himself. It must be his sovereign pleasure to have mercy, or he will tread down his foe. His own glorious nature must prompt him to show compassion, or you cannot escape the return of enmity and wrath. With thankful gladness, then, let him provide the way, dictate the terms. And Jesus is the way. "Whosoever believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "And whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die: believest thou this?"

Go, then, lay down the weapons of thine enmity to God; make an unconditional, unreserved surrender of thyself at the feet of Jesus Christ. Receive salvation as a gift, if so be you may. Take up the yoke and cross of Christ, and make thy boast therein. Receive the Spirit, his best gift. Thus the Holy Ghost will make thee his tabernacle; he will fight and check the carnal mind, the enmity within. He will cause thee to put off the old man, rejoice in the new, and bring thee to serve with the mind the law of God. He will seal thee to the day of promise. He will turn thee from taking pleasure in the carnal mind, to the doing all things for the glory of thy God. He will give

thee, in the end, triumph in Christ, over the law of sin and death from which you shall be freed. He will impart to thee the spirit of adoption, whereby, instead of enmity to God, you may look up and say, "Abba, Father." He will cause the holy hosts above to rejoice and shout, because an enemy is converted to a child—the lost into the saved.

And you, whose enmity is pardoned, blotted out—who have had much forgiven—will love much. With all His other perfections, which unfallen angels know and love, you will realize in him a sin-forgiving God, redeeming Jesus, a sanctifying Holy Ghost. How doubly deep the love of ransomed and forgiven man! How close the ties which bind him to his God! What untold joy in the peace that takes the place of enmity; the heaven which takes the place of hell!

But I have done. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." It, too, is prejudiced and strong. No argument can convince; no declaration of God silence; no threatening make it yield; no entreaty win; no love melt. Oh! Spirit of the living God, be not grieved by the enmity you meet. Subdue the carnal mind within these hearts, and make them ever-living monuments of the grace of him who bought them with his blood. Oh! servant of sin, become the freed-man of the Lord. Oh! enemy of God, become his child.

# SERMON XI.

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## THE SECOND BIRTH.—I.

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John iii. 7.

“YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN.”

THERE could not be a more appropriate subject for our consideration to-day, than our text. For that miraculous Pentecostal descent of the Holy Spirit, which we now commemorate, was vouchsafed in order that we might have an actual and standing proof of the divine source of that great change in man's nature, upon the necessity of which our Saviour here insists, and to establish the means of effecting which was the great object of his visit to the earth. No doubt that mighty and rushing sound from heaven, like wind, which filled the house where the original disciples were sitting; and those lambent flames, which rested upon their bodies, and that wonderful power of speech in strange tongues with which they were endued,—were all immediately intended to establish the inspiration of the apostles, and to clothe their teaching with a divine authority. But the object of that very word, which the apostles were to preach and write, was that it might be the means of producing and perfecting that change in us required in our text. Thus,

St. James declares that the operation through which he and his fellow-disciples had become the children of God, was accomplished in this way: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." Passages to the same effect might be multiplied; but let this suffice to show, that the ultimate object of the miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit at the first Christian Pentecost, was to teach the fundamental Gospel truth, that he was the author of that Second Birth which our Saviour declares in the text must take place; in other words, that descent proved that believers "were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

We can scarcely, therefore, with more propriety be called upon this day to consider any words of Christ, than those recorded in the text: "Ye must be born again."

In doing this, four points claim our attention; each of which may prove highly instructive.

The first of these is: *The necessity of the second birth here spoken of*—"ye must be born again."

The next is: *The nature of this second birth*—what it is to be born again.

The third is: *The means of this second birth*—through what instrumentality or agency we are born again.

The last is: *The effects of this second birth*. How can it be known when we are born again, and what are the blessings which we enjoy in consequence of being born again.

Our first inquiry, therefore, concerns *the necessity of the second birth*. This could not be insisted upon in

stronger terms than those used by our Saviour in the text. He says: "Ye *must* be born again." There is no dispensing with this requirement; there is no exception to this rule. If we desire to become spiritually connected with the Saviour of souls, and present ourselves, in a natural state, before him as candidates for the privilege of this heavenly discipleship, instead of admitting us, with such a character, into this blessed fellowship, he points out, with a warning voice, the qualification which he looks for in those who are admitted to the joys of his redemption. He says: "Ye must be born again;" and to show that this obligation rests upon every individual of our race, upon each one who claims the name of man, he thus expresses himself: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

It is our object to make the truth of this necessity manifest, and to root it in your deepest convictions. In attempting to do this, may we not regard it as a point settled between us, that the grounds of this necessity will be found, if anywhere, in the nature of the first birth? For if the first birth had no deficiencies or positive faults—if it answered the purposes of our own blessedness and God's requirements, there would be no room for demanding a change, for considering another birth to be necessary. Let us look, therefore, at the condition of the soul that has been only once born. When first ushered into this state of existence, how loathsome and helpless is the condition of every child of Adam! But when the hand of kindness has exerted its offices, so innocent and attractive, however, is the infant's ordinary appearance, that the

language of Scripture, respecting its spiritual state and relationship, sounds to every natural ear like the dogma of some morose creed, and every uninstructed tongue is ready to denounce it as untrue. But wait, and observe awhile. How subject to calamity and disease is the whole bodily frame of this interesting little stranger! As many such a one falls a victim to suffering and death, is not the unwilling acknowledgment wrung from every witness, that the entire race of which the mute little patient is a member, are "children of wrath?" The cause may be wholly unaccountable; or if the finger of inspiration points it out, it may be scouted as insufficient or unjust; still, these undeniable facts sustain the Scriptural truth, that "we are by nature the children of wrath;" that, "as sparks fly upward, man is born to trouble."

But let us now proceed a step, and ask, How can all this be rendered consistent with the well-known character of God, with his love, and even with his justice, if we are to consider the present as the original estate, the condition in which we were first created; unless, indeed, we suppose that our nature has received a wrench, and now sustains a very different relation to its Almighty Maker from that which it bore to him, when it came forth from his hand? Where, too, can we find a satisfactory account of that wrench, unless we receive that which is recorded in the Bible? unless we believe that our race had a representative in its first progenitor in the garden; that that representative fell by transgression, and that he afterwards begat children in his then corrupt likeness and cursed condition? All this may run counter to the views of

unenlightened natural reason; it may contradict current maxims in the world; but it furnishes the only account which has ever been given of the way in which we fell into that wicked condition in which we are all undeniably born; and it exactly accords with the revelations which Scripture has made of the entire subject, and which are summed up by St. Paul in the words, “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.”

Unless we take, therefore, the ground, that there is no God, or that he is not the perfect character which we should be all ready to regard him, the sufferings and deaths of unconscious babes prove that the Scriptural doctrine respecting the corruption of our very nature is true; that “by one man many were made sinners;” that before we are actual sinners, we are natural sinners; and that however innocent an infant may be in the sight of those who judge according to the outward appearance, he is yet, by the fact of his first birth, by his simple descent from Adam, corrupt and utterly estranged from God.

In strict conformity with this teaching is the IXth Article of our Church, which declares, that there is “the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil; and therefore, in every person born into this world, it deserveth God’s wrath and damnation.”

Nor can we forbear, brethren, at this point, directing your hearts to lift up themselves in praise to that grace of God in Christ, which gives us ground to hope

that a precious blood has been provided, in which the souls of all infants have their guilt washed away, ere they are taken out of this world; and that the Holy Spirit has been procured to change their corrupt nature, and to fit them for fellowship with God; so that "of such is the kingdom of God" chiefly composed. Oh! what consolation is afforded by this assurance to the bereaved heart of many a Christian parent; as she resigns, in obedience to that summons which must always be obeyed, her endeared offspring into the hands of him who is as ready now to take little children into his arms and bless them, as he was when here upon the earth.

But let it never be forgotten, that the two things are entirely distinct—what infants deserve from God's justice, on account of their fallen nature, and what they enjoy from his grace, as it is revealed in Christ. While we hold fast to the hope, that God gives us in their behalf through Christ, and believe that all infants who die, are by the mere fact of their death proved to be among God's elect and saved; yet let us not be tempted to listen to the reasonings of unenlightened nature, and to regard infants as in themselves meet to inherit this everlasting blessedness; let us maintain as a fundamental Scriptural truth, that "by nature we are not children of the kingdom, but children of the wicked one." And oh! how sadly consistent with this humbling doctrine are the first developments of that nature, whenever it is spared long enough in this world to reveal its real character! Here, too, sound and enlightened observation confirms the statements of God's word. "We go astray from the womb, speak-

ing lies." In how many ten thousand ways do the supreme deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart betray themselves, and that, too in the grossest forms! We deny not that there may be much about some that is highly esteemed among men—it may even pass for godliness in the world; but when it is put into the vessel of God's word, and placed upon the live coals from the altar, it proves to be "abomination in God's sight." Yea, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags: and though we wash ourselves in snow water, and make our hands never so clean, yet does God plunge us in the ditch, and our own clothes do abhor us. For who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one."

This is not only the testimony of "the holy men of old;" but it is the experience of all who have ever, in their own name and strength, attempted to work out a righteousness with God, and who have had their eyes afterwards opened to discern spiritual things, and to perceive the vileness of their own persons and offerings. Oh! how short-coming, as regards the divine standard; how unsatisfactory, as regards their effects upon ourselves, are all our efforts in a state of nature to hold fellowship with the only real God, so holy and so just, as he has revealed himself in the Bible! Our imaginations may indeed create a divine fiction—we may picture to ourselves a God suited to our infirmities, pleased with such service as we can render him before we are converted by his Spirit, and incorporated by faith in Christ; we may flatter and enjoy ourselves much in the worship of this imaginary god, whom we suppose to be the true God. We may even hold on

to this delusion until death, and our hope only perish when God taketh away the soul. St. Paul lived for many years under the power of this self-deception. He declares that he "was alive without the law once." He means here by his having been "without the law," that he had had no spiritual understanding of it, and was therefore as really without it—although he was a Jew—as if he had been an unenlightened Gentile. He was still, however, at this very period "alive:" i. e., he flattered himself that he was all this while complying with God's requirements, and that he was not spiritually dead, but alive. He was strong in the conviction that he was then living with God, and would forever live with him hereafter. "But," the apostle continues, "when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." That is, when God taught him the true meaning and requirements of his commandments, and caused the law, in all its spiritual and rigid exactions, to stand before him—his own state of disobedience was unveiled—it seemed like the reviving of sin from the dead in his breast; he became conscious of its power and guilt; he perceived that sin was controlling every faculty and affection, and that he was in consequence lying under an infinite load of divine wrath. As a consequence, he testifies that he "died:" i. e., his hopes of God's favor were at once blighted, and he felt that he was "dead in trespasses and sins." St. Paul, in this sad experience, too, was only the follower and forerunner of many who have been brought under the same severe, but yet gracious schooling from on high.

Many, indeed, in every generation have been sin-

cere, and earnest, and indefatigable, and self-afflicting in the discharge of much which they have supposed was pleasing to God. To every spiritual observer, however, it has been obvious that their whole service was unauthorized, and at the same time heartless and joyless. It seemed to be, and was, the work which is done by an unwilling slave, or at least of one who was laboring for reward, and not from love.

Some of the very best, too, of those who have thus called themselves to the service of *their* God, but who have never been recognized as his servants by *the* God, have from time to time had their eyes opened to discern the true character and requirements of God and their own spiritual condition; and the result has been that each of them has been able, in all its fullness, and with self-application, to adopt the confession of St. Paul, and to testify, that "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Under the revelation, every such a one has felt as incapable of doing anything pleasing to God, as a dead man is of moving. And when an acknowledged supernatural change has been wrought upon his soul, it is equivalent to a passing from death to life; scales fall from the eyes; he who had been blind now sees; old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new. Now he begins to serve God with other feelings, and with real delight. God is no longer regarded as a taskmaster, but is served with filial fear. The soul itself is no longer a slave, but is the Lord's freeman. In every feeling and action the love of Christ constrains.

Thus the experience of St. Paul, as well after, as before he met the Lord Jesus, on his way to Damascus, accords with the history of every new-born soul.

We must not, however, anticipate what is to be considered under future heads. We have said enough to show that not only publicans and sinners, but the most reputable Pharisees, need a thorough change of heart; that not only gross and undeniable transgressions are offensive to God, but that natural piety is also unacceptable in his sight.

Our first birth involves us in a state of guilt and slavery to sin. We need a second birth; by which we can be removed out of this fearful relationship to God—that we may be no longer subject to his wrath, but be rendered capable of doing works pleasing in his eyes. Until we have been the subjects of this second birth, he will not allow us to approach him with peace or acceptance. All that we do is loathsome to him. Even our ordinary avocations are reprobate while we remain in a natural state: our ploughing is pronounced to be sin, and the sacrifice which we offer is regarded as abomination in his sight. Thus we come short, in the condition in which our first birth places us, of the glory of God—of what he requires of us—of the way which he has appointed as that in which his name is to be honored. By the same deficiency, too, we of course fail of securing that blessedness which it is the privilege of every moral and immortal creature of God to attain. No fellowship is vouchsafed us with the Holy and Just One. If we aspire to it, we are denied. Should we even desire to become subjects of that kingdom, which the

great love and grace of God commissioned his Son to establish on this earth for the salvation of our fallen souls, the King meets us with the requisition, "Ye must be born again." As we present ourselves at the gate of heaven, after death, and seek admittance, we find inscribed upon it the same regulation, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

Thus all the children of fallen Adam are, by the curse which their first birth entails, exiles from their God—in both worlds, throughout time and eternity, restless wanderers from his bosom—made such and kept such by a law which sprung from God's nature, and is as fixed and unchangeable as that nature itself. It is revealed for our learning in the text. The youngest and the simplest in this house can understand and retain its terms. It reads, "Ye must be born again."

The grounds which exist in the first birth for the necessity of a second birth, we trust, brethren, are now manifest. Let us, therefore, for the present, here rest the matter, reserving for consideration at another time the remaining points—the first of which is, *the nature of that second birth*, which we are now ready to admit must take place. We venture, however, upon a brief application of what has been already said.

From what an oppressive burden, then, are those of us delivered, who have been born again! No law, which changeth not, excludes us from the hope of salvation. Nay, we already have the adoption of sons, and are admitted into fellowship with the Lord Almighty, as children and heirs. Many causes may

indeed combine to make us groan within ourselves, although we be the first fruits of the Spirit; yet, while subject to these, we may well wait in hope for the manifestation of the sons of God. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us, when we shall see Jesus as he is, and be transformed into his perfect image; when those feeble and dim lineaments of character, by which we are even now recognized as the children of God, shall shine in full strength, and we shall be satisfied by awaking up in his likeness.

Then let us, this day, when we are to meet as the sons and daughters of God, around our Father's table, call upon our souls and all that is within us to praise his name, who supplies us in that bread and wine with the sacramental signs and proofs, that he gave up his only-begotten Son to bleed and die, in order that the Spirit through whom we have been begotten into his own image, might be purchased for our souls, and we might thus meet the requisitions of that unchangeable law, by which it has been decreed, that we "must be born again." Nay; let us praise our heavenly Father, not only for what we may be, but for what we are—for our having been translated from nature's darkness into the light and liberty of the sons of God.

But ye, beloved, who are still laboring under the curses of the first birth—still burdened with the necessity of being born again, how can you rest; how can you be contented in the pursuit of any worldly gain, or in the discharge of any duties in the Church of Christ, while the Head of the Church himself fore-

warns you, that ere you can enter into his spiritual, which is his only real and eternal kingdom, “ye must be born again?” Oh! let this text sound in your ears, whenever you lie down, and whenever you rise up—wherever you go, whether it be about your ordinary business, or even to the house of God, or to the domestic altar, or to the closet. Let the conviction sink deep into your mind, that of all the treasure which you are laying up here you will soon be forever stripped unless you be born again; that, as an outcast, you will soon be banished from the presence and company of God’s visible people, unless you be born again. Oh! build not upon the foundation of the first birth. Strive not to make nature better; but let grace take the place of nature in your heart. Work not for life, but from life. Let Him who quickeneth the dead say to you “Live,” and then you will perform the works not of the dead, but of the living. Cease then from all that you can do, and look unto Him, who can beget you to a lively hope by his own resurrection from the dead. Then with one heart and one voice, each of the two classes in this house, those who before had been twice born, and those who have just experienced the second birth, will be able to join in this well-known song of Zion, which is founded in our text:—

“Amaz’d I stood, but could not tell  
Which way to shun the gates of hell,  
For death and hell drew near.  
I strove, indeed, but strove in vain;  
The sinner must be born again,  
Still sounded in my ear.

When to the law I trembling fled,  
It poured its curses on my head,  
    A vast oppressive load.  
Alas! I read and saw it plain,  
The sinner must be born again,  
    Or feel the wrath of God!

The saints I heard with rapture tell  
How Jesus conquered death and hell,  
    And broke the fowler's snare;  
Yet when I found the truth remain,  
The sinner must be born again,  
    I sunk in deep despair.

But while I thus in anguish lay,  
Jesus of Nazareth passed that way,  
    And felt his pity move—  
The sinner by His justice slain,  
Now by His grace is born again,  
    And sings redeeming love."

## SERMON XII.

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### THE SECOND BIRTH.—II.

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John iii. 7.

“YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN.”

IN now resuming the consideration of this text, we are prepared, by what has gone before to admit, and even to insist upon, the necessity of some great change in our natural characters—a change so thorough that it should be considered equivalent to a second birth. It has appeared that otherwise we can never attain the great end of our existence—we will never appreciate or enjoy fellowship with God—nor indeed will we be allowed to hold such blessed intercourse with the Holy and Just One. The grounds of this necessity were found to be based upon the character of our first birth—upon that likeness to our first fallen father in which we were begotten—and in which we were placed under that same curse of God, and entertained the same enmity to God and his ways, by which Adam was distinguished after he had sinned. This stern necessity, too, we have seen, is just as universal as it is radical. None can plead that he is exempt from the law proclaimed by our Saviour in the text.

As a preliminary to our entering into the kingdom

of Christ, it is required not only of the open and gross sinner, but of the most moral atheist, and of the most pharisaical religionist, that he should be born again. The simple fact of our having been once born—and that, too, though we should die before we could have sinned in our own persons after the similitude of Adam's transgression, before we could have actually disobeyed—the mere fact of our first birth entails the necessity of a second birth. Whether we be what is esteemed good or bad, either in the world or in the Church, if we belong to the human race, we are not numbered on earth among those who are saved, nor in heaven among those who are saved, unless we are born again. If, in our natural state, either in time or throughout eternity, we seek or claim an interest in Christ, he repels us, until, in accordance with the pre-requisite law in our text, we are born again.

Since such, then, is the thorough and unexcepting character of the Saviour's "must be" in the text, how all-important is it for us to understand what the nature of that change is upon which our spiritual and eternal welfare depends! This is the point which we now propose to determine.

The question before us is, *What is the second birth?* or *What is it to be born again?* It may be important, however, before we positively say what it is, to refer to a few things which it is not. For all will admit that the common notions on this mysterious matter are exceedingly confused and erroneous. Every truly renewed person will be ready to testify how mistaken his own views of the subject were, before he became experimentally acquainted with the nature of the new

birth. His intercourse with worldlings, too, has shown him that among them the same misconception universally obtains. Their ideas of the change upon which the Saviour insists are almost as gross as those which Nicodemus formed of it, when he heard it originally insisted upon in our text. If they are not quite so carnal as to suppose that the heart in our bodies is taken out, and another substituted in its place, they have at least some dreamy expectation that that portion of their souls, their spiritual essence, which they suppose is the seat of their affections, and which is known by the name of "the heart," will undergo some great change, if they should become the subjects of the new birth. It may be necessary, therefore, for some to know that we mean not, and that the Scripture does not intend to insist upon any change in the whole or in any part of the essence of the soul itself, when it is declared that we must be born again. A regenerate man is the very same person in the essence of his soul that he was before he was renewed and when he lived in sin. St. Paul says, "I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious:" and every new-born soul has a consciousness that he is identically the same person who said, and did, and felt the sinful things of which he was guilty while he remained in the flesh. Let none, therefore, be vainly expecting a change, either in whole or in part, of the substance of his soul. This never occurs; and such is not the second birth.

But again, we would remark, that *the second birth does not consist in any change of our professions.* We may become convinced that our former creeds were

erroneous, and be brought to acknowledge the one that is true. We may have been born and bred heathen, and been induced to number ourselves, through the appointed ordinances, among Christians; so we may leave the ranks of mere moralists, or infidels, or Roman Catholics, or Unitarians, or any other errorists, and enlist ourselves among the followers of the true Christ; and yet be like Simon Magus, who deserted Paganism and witchcraft, was baptized, and began to consort with Peter and John—although we are told that he had neither part nor lot in the matter, but was still in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. We are not, therefore, necessarily new-born souls, because we are the members of an orthodox and true church.

Once more, *reformation is not regeneration*. It is very true, that every open and profligate transgressor leaves off his sins, and leads a new life, whenever he is born again. *He* has a false and unfounded hope of being a child of God, who does not repent of his iniquities, and forsake them. But this outward amendment very frequently results from no inward saving change. It is sometimes the mere consequence of sordid calculation. Reflection, in many cases, leads those who have been reckless in crime, to become in a measure circumspect. The swearer abstains from an oath; the adulterer becomes outwardly chaste; the drunkard no longer indulges in his cups; but still one kind of sin has only been exchanged for another. He is merely more sober and demure in his course of rebellion against heaven, and his heart is as much averse from God as it ever was. Or, it may be, that

age has worked its effects; his desires have, in the course of time, become blunted; he no longer is capable of taking pleasure in previous indulgences; and he is separated from his former sins, as a tree drops the fruit which rots and falls off—its own nature, however, remaining unchanged, and the sap which circulates in it, and gives life and character to it, being exactly of the same kind that it was before. It by no means follows, therefore, that a reformed man is a regenerate man; and he who classes himself with those who have been born again, simply because he has left off his old sins, and views them as foolish and even criminal, will find in the end that his house is not standing on the foundation upon which he had supposed it was built.

But again, we would remark, that *many of the ordinary gifts and graces of the Spirit of God himself should not be mistaken for the new birth*. The two things are entirely distinct, and are by no means inseparable. There may be, on the one hand, true children of God, who have no mark by which they can be distinguished as such among men. Thus, the apostles were undoubtedly the subjects of the inward and effectual operation of the Spirit of God, during our Saviour's lifetime and immediately subsequent to his death; and yet it was some time before the Holy Ghost was poured upon them, so that they possessed and exercised the gifts of tongues and of other wonders. Ever since, many an ungifted and obscure child of our heavenly Father has been forced to appeal from the severe and unjust decision of men to his testimony on high, and his record

with his God. While such saints, too, have been neglected by the world and the church, many carnally-minded characters have been extensively and highly admired for those external graces of the Spirit with which they have been adorned. Judas, for instance, had the grace of apostleship, and it cannot be doubted that he possessed many powers which made him an object of envy; yet our Lord knew from the beginning who it was who should betray him. There were some, too, who preached Christ in such a way as to make St. Paul rejoice; and yet they did it only through contention and for strife.

We should not be astonished, therefore, when all the mysteries of the divine word seem to be understood by those whose hearts have not been affected by the revelation; nor, where some possess a talent for preaching and a gift in prayer; nay, exercise these endowments with the tongues of men and almost of angels, and yet are only sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

Let none, then, build his hope upon the office which he fills, or the talents he exercises in the house of God. In the language of an old bishop of our church, "Gifts prove nothing; they may be but the gilding of a rotten post, the varnish of a corrupt heart. As it was the custom of old to crown those beasts' heads with garlands of flowers, that were ordained to be a sacrifice, so God may sometimes crown the heads of wicked men with flowery parts and gifts, whom yet he intends to make a sacrifice to his wrath and justice."

But we would call upon you to distinguish, finally, *between the second birth and those raptures and ecstasies with which it is frequently confounded.* Far be it from us to intimate, that the genuine work of the Spirit of God upon the heart, is not sometimes accompanied with the most extravagant actions on the part of its subject. But even in such cases, these extravagances are no fruit of the Spirit, but result from the infirmity of the creature; and they should never be countenanced, but rather protested against, by every sober and enlightened child of God. In themselves, they lead only to evil, and they frequently induce the misguided to build a hope which perisheth with those temporary and evanescent feelings upon which it was founded. What, indeed, is better calculated to fill the soul with rapture, than some mistaken views of the Gospel, which lead it to suppose that it has an interest in Christ; and having thus obtained the pardon of sin, has escaped all fear of hell, and is entitled to peace with God, and an inheritance among the saints in light! The most unseemly exhibitions have resulted from such misappropriations of the blessings of the Gospel. The uninitiated have thus conceived that heaven has almost been begun in the hearts of some who, in a little while, are reported to have fallen from grace.

Let none, therefore, rely upon such raptures as proof of the second birth; but let them rather try this spirit by some scriptural test, and ascertain whether it be of God. On the other hand, let none deny and denounce the whole doctrine of the second birth, because these extravagances are sometimes

identified with it. For they will thus place under their ban the most sober and scriptural minds. Nor are we to be driven from insisting upon the doctrine of the new birth, because some would class us on this account among enthusiasts and fanatics. For even our Saviour was regarded by many of the most moral and highly esteemed of his day, as “beside himself;” and Paul was denounced by a Roman governor as “mad;” and the Author of the Book of Wisdom very Scripturally forewarns such persons, that the time will come when they shall change their tone, and say, in the trouble of their minds, This is he whom we accounted a scorn and a common reproach; we fools esteemed his life madness, and his latter end to have been shameful; but how is he reckoned among the sons of God, and his lot is among the holy ones?

But, as we have thus distinguished the second birth from many things which it is not; let us now point out what it positively is.

*What is it, then, to be born again?* To this we answer, *It is for our souls to have an interest in Christ as our Head; and to be renewed into his image in our minds and hearts.*

This definition very naturally divides itself into two parts; the first of which is that, *as new-born souls, we must have an interest in Christ as our Head.* That he who has been born again does sustain such a relation to Christ, no Scriptural mind doubts, and that the forming of this relationship is a part of the second birth, will readily appear. But little, however, is generally made of this point in this connection. To be thus joined with Christ, has been usually supposed

to be a part of our justification before God, and to be an immediate effect of faith. It has been thus left for the most part for the consideration of those who are treating on these subjects. The consequence has been, that the whole doctrine of the second birth is frequently discussed with little or no reference to Christ; that it has been made to consist almost exclusively of a change in our affections, and of our being renewed into that image of God which we lost by the fall. The source of this great change, it is true, every evangelical minister always insists is the Spirit of God; but the Spirit is seldom presented in this operation of regenerating the soul, as the representative of Christ, and as thus uniting the subject of the work to Christ, as the member of the body is joined to its head. It is only the restitution of the image which Adam lost, that is insisted upon; and hence the doctrine of the second birth has been painfully felt by many a tender Christian conscience, as somewhat legal in its features, as requiring a renewal of holiness in the heart before the ungodly can be accepted by God, and being thus antagonistic to the free grace and salvation which are to be found in Christ. This misapprehension, however, results, as we have intimated, from only a partial presentation of the subject by the preacher. If the paternity of Christ, in treating of the second birth, were always kept prominently in view, no such impression would be left on any evangelical mind.

We would, therefore, at this point, without any reference to the Spirit of God as the great agent by which this connection is formed between Christ and the soul,

(for that will come up under a subsequent head,) call upon you to note, that *in the second birth, Christ becomes the Father and Head of the new creature.* Every child must have a father; and in the spiritual world, this holds as true as it does in the visible world. We have seen, too, in our previous discourse, that all children have the same natural spiritual father, even fallen Adam; that the guilt of his original transgression is ours, and that his corrupt character is ours; and ours, moreover, by the mere fact of our first birth. No one can understand the natural spiritual condition of any man born into this world, who leaves out of view his connection with fallen Adam. Adam begot children in his own likeness; and the Scripture is explicit, that “as by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners, even so, by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.” “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

Our first birth is a natural descent from Adam, placing us in his train, where we follow his steps and meet with his curses. Our second birth is a supernatural descent from Christ, by which we derive spiritual life and all the blessings of redemption. No man, unless he be in Christ, is a new creature. We insist, therefore, that a part of the second birth is the change of our federal headship; that which we have by nature for that which is conferred by grace; that which we have in Adam for that which is to be found in Christ.

Do you ask me, *What this Federal Headship of Christ consists in, and what it confers?* Brethren, we deny not that there is a visible headship of Christ, by

which he seems to be, when he is not really, our head; by which those who are nothing more than mere natural children of the first Adam, comply with all the ordinances through which they are introduced into the company of those who appear to be members of Christ's mystical body; by which they become partakers of many outward means of grace, though they are strangers to its inward blessings; by which they have every external claim to the title of the children of the kingdom, while in spirit and in truth they are aliens.

But this is not the headship, a share of which forms part of the second birth. Neither we, nor the Scriptures, know anything in this connection, of having a headship in Christ, which does not consist in his being our actual spiritual Father, as truly so as Adam is our natural father—not sacramentally such, but really such—begetting us, not by outward signs in the sight of men, but doing it really before the eyes of angels; not bestowing upon us visible means of grace, which may prove to us either blessings or curses, as we improve or abuse them, but precious gifts enjoyed by our souls; not enduing us with one hand in time, with that, which he will take away with the other in eternity, but enriching us through our endless existence. It is that headship in Christ Jesus, through which there is no condemnation to them who possess it; the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus making them free from the law of sin and death.

We insist, then, that it is a prominent and glorious part of the second birth, for us to be brought into a spiritually filial relation to Christ, to be translated

from the ranks of the children of the first Adam into those of the second Adam ; to be thus relieved from the guilt and curses of the first man who is of the earth, and introduced to the blessings purchased by the second man who is the Lord from heaven. It may not suit the theories and systems of precise and philosophical divines, but there is much scriptural doctrine in that prayer of our baptismal service, in which we are led to ask for the candidate, that he may obtain “the remission of his sins by spiritual regeneration.” What a glorious change, therefore, does the second birth involve, when through it we are brought into the same relationship to the only-begotten Son of God, which we had naturally sustained to a fallen creature !

But we would now have you note, in the last place, that this second birth implies that *we be also changed in our hearts and minds into the image of Christ*. Some, we know, would choose to tell you under this head, in very learned and philosophical terms, of the mode in which the faculties of the soul are affected by this great spiritual change, and to treat in the abstract, of those habits of grace and virtue which are imparted to our renewed natures. We do not object, indeed, to this mode of discussion, at other times and in other places than the present—for it has its uses—provided always, that all that is said be in complete subordination to the word of God. But this suits not our purpose now, and, indeed, we always leave it to other hands.

There are others, too, who would prefer to speak of the character of unfallen Adam, as that into which we

are renewed in the second birth; but we know very little of Adam in his first estate, except generally that he was holy, and in the likeness of God. And if any are disposed to talk of God, apart from that manifestation and exemplification of his will and character which have been given us in the life of Christ, we would check ourselves from being misled by their show of wisdom, by the remembrance of St. Paul's warning: "The world by wisdom knew not God." No, brethren, all that we desire to know—all that fallen man can truly know of the character of God, is taught, and has been exemplified by Christ. Neither does it appear, that if we were only renewed into the image of unfallen Adam, we would partake of one tithe of the blessings in which we share by bearing the lineaments of the only-begotten of the Father, manifest in flesh. Let it be, therefore, our privilege and salvation to view the second birth as the transformation of our hearts and minds into the image of Christ.

Look, now, at *the character of Christ*, and then, I know, you will ask, *How can any imperfect man be considered as moulded into that likeness?* What shall we say of him who so loved righteousness, that God anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows?—of that character with which the holy Father did not hesitate to declare he was well pleased? Only a few of its lines can be here imperfectly drawn, but they shall be such as to convey some conception of the attractive whole.

As he looks upon Jesus, then, who does not feel that he is in the presence of one who, though in his lower nature a creature, is as *pure* in his eyes and

heart as God himself? He knew no sin, even in a glance, or thought, or wish, and of course not in word or deed. Being, too, of his own will, placed under the law, he shrank not from universal *obedience*. There were with him no reserves. He did not many things, and then turned back, when he had to encounter crucifixion. He “learned,” that is, he went through the experience of obedience, “by the things which he suffered.” His *delight*, also, was in the service of God, and in communion with his heavenly Father. He had meat to eat, which others knew not of; it was doing the will of him that sent him. And while others were seeking and enjoying natural rest, he spent nights in prayer.

How *patient*, *meek*, and *merciful*, likewise, was his spirit! Throughout his whole life, how he endured the contradiction against himself of open enemies and of imperfect followers! How he passed through the scene of mocking, spitting, and smiting in the judgment-hall! He answered not reviling. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep dumb before his shearer, he opened not his mouth. He prayed for the most unfeeling murderers, “Father, forgive them.” He appealed in all the anguish, but without any of the sin, of despair, to the Father who had withdrawn himself, with this piteous cry: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” though he knew full well that his own personal merits entitled him to sit upon the throne in heaven, enjoying the smiling and shining presence of his Father’s face.

Though ordained, too, to tread such a wine-press, we would call upon you also to note, that Jesus *knew*

*no faulty fear.* He was sometimes inexpressibly straitened till that was accomplished which he had to meet. His soul was once troubled unto death; he is even said to have “feared” to such a degree that “strong crying and tears” were wrung from him; but though the flesh trembled under what it knew God could do, yet the spirit was willing to endure what God would do; and he yielded to no fear which prompted him to flee from even a wrathful God; and as to what men could do, so much above our race was he exalted, that he knew no temptation to resist the evil they could do.

Finally, in that combination and workmanship of all the other graces, *wisdom*, how exalted and divine was Christ! How fitly spoken were his words! how effective were his acts! how melting were his looks! “In him were hid all the treasures of wisdom.” In thy whole history and character, Jesus, thou art grace and love! Truly, in these as well as in thy person, “thou art the Son of God; thou art the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person!”

Do any at this point shrink from considering the Scriptures as teaching that the subject of the second birth is renewed into the likeness of such infinite perfection? But can the Scriptures on this point be more explicit than they are? Are we not told, that God “predestinated those whom he foreknew to be conformed to the image of his Son?” and that they “all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image?” Do we not read, that “Christ is formed in” such; that “Jesus Christ is in” them? Are we not exhorted to “let the same mind be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus?”

And does not our master and Lord inform us, that “he has given us an example that we should follow his steps?”

Into a living image, therefore, of the spotless and obedient, and lamb-like, and forgiving, and courageous, and trusting, and wise, and entirely gracious Spirit that was in Christ, is every subject of the second birth renewed. Upon nothing short of this does the Word of God insist. No feature in the character of Jesus must be wanting in that of the new creature. In each and all of its parts, the latter must be conformed to the former. The Son is “the first-born among many brethren.”

Some, however, will here be disposed to doubt whether, according to this standard, any of the fallen sons of men have ever been born again. But let none of the children, whom God has given to Christ, be sad, as though this second Adam had not begotten them into his own likeness, because the image shines not with the brightness of the original; nay, is sometimes so dimly reflected, that they are scarcely conscious of its existence within themselves.

Oh! there is abundant cause for every imperfection which is exhibited by the new-born child of God, while he continues to tabernacle in the flesh! Two natures abide within him—the new and the old, the flesh and the Spirit—and these are contrary the one to the other, and lust against each other; so that he cannot do the things that he would. Nay, what he would not, that he does, and what he does not, that he would. Yea, even while he serves with his flesh the law of sin, he delights in the law of the Lord

after the inner man. What a body of inconsistency and contradiction is that child of the first Adam whom the second Adam hath begotten again into his own likeness! Viewed in one aspect, he is more than an angel; while, if you look upon him in another light, and at another time, he may appear to be like his natural father, the wicked one. What conflicts are often waged between the new and the old man! What groanings are continually wrung from the racked spirit, though it be now one of the sons of God, yet restless and dissatisfied, until Jesus shall appear, and it shall be like him whom it shall then see as he is.

In the meanwhile, however, though babes in Christ, we still live; we have the lineaments of him who hath begotten us; we are sound and whole in every limb; and we shall grow up into the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. Though the serpent often bruise the heel of the promised seed of the woman within us, yet that seed shall shortly bruise the head of the serpent under his own and our feet. From every trouble Christ will deliver us; from every fall he will raise us; from every conflict we shall come out more than conquerors. For though the members be guilty in themselves, yet are they accepted in their head; though the sons be weak and imperfect, yet shall they be brought to glory by the captain of salvation; since we are born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even of that word of God which liveth and abideth in us for ever, and which was with God and was God. We shall awake up hereafter, satisfied with that likeness which we shall bear to him who hath begotten us. In the meanwhile, let us grow up

into that image, and proceed from strength to strength, and from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

But while some of us are here raising our Ebenezer, in view of what God hath wrought in us, and of the prospects with which he hath crowned us, are there any of us who are still laboring under the guilt, and necessity, and woe, which are inherited from the first Adam; and as we look to the second Adam, do we hear him say, “If you would enter my kingdom, ye must be born again? I must become your father and head, and ye must be changed into my image?” In anguish does any one turn and ask, *Through what agency, by what means, can I become a subject of this second birth?* This is the question which we propose to answer next.

NOTE.—The third and concluding Sermon on the SECOND BIRTH, was little more than begun by our beloved friend, when he was laid aside from all earthly labor, by his last illness.—EDITORS.

## SERMON XIII.

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### AN APPEAL FOR OUR SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

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Gen. xvii. 18.

“AND ABRAHAM SAID UNTO GOD, O THAT ISHMAEL MIGHT LIVE BEFORE  
THEE!”

THERE is something peculiarly touching in the *inter-views* of God with the patriarch who offered this prayer. They authorized the pious Jehoshaphat, as you will see in 2 Chronicles xx. 7, to denominate him God's “friend,” long before there was any direct, divine sanction for his receiving such a title. In the above passage—one of his public addresses to the Almighty—this excellent Jewish monarch thus expresses himself: “Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham, thy friend, for ever?” And God was pleased, in after years, to affix the seal of his approbation to this honorable distinction of “the Father of the faithful,” and to show that the appropriation of this name to him by Jehoshaphat, was suggested by the Holy Spirit, when he thus spoke to his people, through Isaiah the prophet, chapter xli. 8: “Thou, Israel, art my servant Jacob, whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.”

The aptness and divine origin of this appellation forthwith gave it currency in the household of faith; and Abraham, according to St. James ii. 23, "was called the friend of God." Although, then, "such honor have all his saints"—for we read in the Gospel of John xv. 14, these words of our gracious Saviour to his disciples, "Ye are my friends"—yet this name, "the friend of God," is our patriarch's, by way of eminence. If we would perform the duties, and enjoy the privileges, which friendship with God involves, we must look to the intercourse which Abraham had with his "friend," as our model. And surely it is enough to make the heart of every one of the "spiritual seed of Abraham" leap for joy, as he reads the inspired account of the several interviews which took place between the unequal parties, who were bound to each other by these close and blessed ties! Such inconceivably simple condescension on the part of the High and Holy One—the inhabitant of eternity, the dweller in the high and holy place—so unreserved in his communications, so thoughtful of the wishes and interests of his fallen creature and companion; and in the latter, such humble consciousness of being "dust and ashes;" such implicit obedience to the most trying commands; such unaffected gladness in the reception of the promises! Our chapter abounds with instances of the kind; and our text itself shows the kind of relationship and intercourse which existed between God and his "friend."

At the suggestion of Sarah, and through what we are constrained to admit as the mere human wisdom of Abraham, he had become the father of

Ishmael by Hagar, his wife's maid. This "son of the bondwoman" had now attained the age of thirteen, and had, as appears from the entire narrative, installed himself in the paternal heart of our patriarch. He was, too, thus far, evidently regarded by his now venerable parent, as "the child of promise." But the interview with God, which our chapter records, had dashed these hopes, and taught Abraham to expect the inheritor of the blessing through his aged wife.

Always gladly yielding his own wishes to the determinations of his heavenly "friend," Abraham expressed his delight at receiving this divine communication in all the simplicity of his guileless heart, with laughter, and by ejaculations of astonishment at so unexpected and blessed an announcement. And then, as if mindful of his beloved son, whose prospects had been so effectually blighted, he uttered the prayerful exclamation in our text: "Oh! that Ishmael might live before thee!"

We are forbidden, as it would seem, by the entire history of the event, and by numerous passages of Holy Writ, which commend this "friend of God" for not having "staggered at the promise through unbelief," from admitting that very general construction of our text, which regards it as a wish on the part of Abraham for an alteration in the divine purpose which had just been revealed—for the prevention of the birth of Isaac, and for the securement of the promised blessing to the son already born. All that we are prepared to concede on this subject—and we gather this from the explicit answer which the prayer received from God—is, that the affectionate

parent desired Ishmael to be connected with Isaac, perhaps as the other eleven sons of Jacob were afterwards associated with Judah, in the reception of the promise. This, however, God denied, and gave Abraham to understand that his covenant should only be established with the son whom Sarah should bear. But, that even this wish for Ishmael to be allowed a subordinate interest in the promise, did not exhaust the intention of our patriarch in his prayer, is evident from the words of God's reply: "As for Ishmael," said God, "I have heard thee; behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly."

It would seem, then, that in the most important particular, God had complied with Abraham's request. He had heard and granted his friend's petition in behalf of Ishmael. And we freely admit, that to a carnal and unscriptural mind, the words of God's reply appear to insure to the lad only a numerous offspring and great temporal prosperity. But he who is well read in the language and the fulfilment of the promises in this patriarchal age, knows that earthly blessings were typical of those which were spiritual and eternal, and that to the sense of faith, the first were but an earnest of the last.

When, therefore, God pledges himself to multiply and enrich Ishmael in worldly things, it by no means precludes, but rather encourages the expectation of more precious and lasting blessings. Thus, in Abraham's case, the earthly Canaan typified the heavenly land, and myriads of natural descendants were but the token and pledge of a numerous spiritual seed. When,

in addition, we consider the natural yearnings of our affectionate patriarch towards his at present only son,—the estimate which his pre-eminently spiritual mind had formed of the blessedness of friendship and communion with God,—it would seem unwarrantable to allow that he included not a desire in our prayer for the eternal salvation of his child, who seemed about, in God's purpose, to become an outcast for life, and in the world to come.

Let a comparison of Scripture with Scripture, too, interpret the wording of our text; and while we admit, that it may legitimately be allowed to contain a wish for Ishmael's success in life, and for his being connected with that promise which in the event was ultimately confined to Isaac, yet we insist that the main design of the prayer was to insure, in behalf of the child, the spiritual and everlasting blessings of God's saving grace. "And Abraham said unto God," when he found that he was to be discomfited in all the plans of his earthly wisdom to fulfil the divine purposes, and that the child of his affections and hopes had been rejected as the heir of the promise—he said, with the fearful prospect before him of his beloved child's remaining estranged from himself and his Almighty "friend," in both worlds, "Oh! that Ishmael might live before thee."

But are we not here giving too spiritual an interpretation to the word "live?" Are we borne out in our views of the word by other Scriptures? Let us see. Brethren, Jesus said unto Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoso-

ever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." We are told by St. Paul, that God *quickeneth* those who are dead in trespasses and sins.

And to mention but one more Scripture of the kind, —the parallels of which abound,—the Church is thus addressed by God, through Ezekiel: "When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live." What other conclusion, then, can be reached, concerning the meaning of our text, especially where the enlightened supplicant not only prays that his child might live, but that he might live before God? We doubt not, therefore, but that Abraham in our text chiefly desired the conversion and salvation of his child; it was his request that his son might be quickened in the inner man, and live in the enjoyment of God's presence and love. And if such were the petition, there is no room to question the result. "As for Ishmael," said God, "I have heard thee; behold, I have blessed him."

We know there are declarations in the word of God, and also a recorded fact, which would seem counter to the charitable conclusion we have reached. Thus, Hagar is foretold, that "the hand of the son whom she should bear" would be against every man, and every man's hand against him. But as Isaac inherited the promises not in himself, but in his posterity, so this prophecy respecting the son of Hagar was fulfilled only in his children; since it is evident from the Scripture, that Ishmael lived and died in quietness and peace among his brethren. Nor is there any

difficulty in disposing of the fact which is alleged against the hope that Ishmael became ultimately a child of God. It is true, we read that at the circumcision of Isaac, Ishmael mocked; which, under all the circumstances, must be considered as betraying disrespect towards the ordinance and purpose of God. But the child had then only completed his fourteenth year, and was, in body and mind, inferior to those who have attained a like age in our day, as is evident from his mother's carrying him in her arms, when she left her master's house. While, too, we exculpate not the act, yet it precluded not the youthful sinner from a subsequent turning unto God. Surely, in inspired times and in this age, many who have reached maturer years have had more heinous transgressions covered with the righteousness of Christ, and have been sanctified and honored as chosen vessels of mercy to other souls. And whatever may have been the natural feelings of Ishmael at the birth and circumcision of his younger brother, it is yet plain that he afterwards cheerfully acquiesced in the sovereign dispositions of God among the members of Abraham's household; that he recognized Isaac as the inheritor of his own expected blessing, and that the two sons, with the most fraternal feelings, united in committing the body of their aged father to the tomb.

When, therefore, we read, that Ishmael "died in the presence of all his brethren," there is good ground to hope, that he who, because his mother was a bond-woman, was used by the Holy Ghost to typify that fearful and slavish spirit which is always engendered by any union between our souls and the law as their

justifier, and who was consequently cast out of his father's house to teach the believer's duty to free himself from all servility of the kind; that he was yet finally gathered into the fold of Christ—an eternally living monument of the sovereignty and power of saving grace.

This glorious conclusion we arrive at from these words, falling from the mouth of God: "Behold, I have blessed him;" for surely if Balak was authorized to use this language to a wicked, but real prophet of the Lord, we can look upward to that prophet's God and say: "We wot, that he whom thou blessest is blessed." Nor, Christian parents, should you forget that this ineffable result was reached through a righteous father's prayer. "And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!"—a part of the answer to which petition was: "As for Ishmael, I have heard thee."

Bear with me, then, while I endeavor, for a few moments, to enforce from our text the duty of seeking, in a scriptural way, the salvation of your little ones. Surely this is not only the privilege, but the special obligation of every spiritually-minded parent in our midst.

In the introduction of this discourse, we admired the intimate terms of friendship to which Abraham was admitted by his God. Do you covet the like blessing for yourselves? Let us inquire, then, for a moment into the secret reason of his near access to God; and you will learn, that if you wish to promote your own spiritual interests, you should perseveringly seek the salvation of your child. If we look into the

chapter succeeding that before us, we find God disclosing his purposes of vengeance respecting the cities of the plain, to his earthly friend, and as though it were not in his heart to deny the patriarch aught, binding himself to continued forbearance, upon the more and more stringent conditions which every subsequent prayer of Abraham contained. We are all ready to exclaim, Oh! that we were on such terms with God; that we had such access to, such influence with the Father of our spirits! Now, we are favored with the reasons which operated on the mind of God thus to honor and bless his friend. We read: "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." Such blessedness, then, was vouchsafed, because it was the great design of our patriarch, in all his personal and domestic regulations and habits, to enrich the members of his family with spiritual and everlasting treasure. It was then, brethren, no solitary and comparatively cheap effort for the salvation of his son, which Abraham put forth in offering the petition before us. "It was the effectual, fervent prayer of a *righteous* man, which availeth much with God." It proceeded from a deep consciousness that his own unwearied and faithful parental labors for the salvation of his child, would be unavailing without a blessing from the Lord, and that the Spirit only giveth life. This it was which wrung from him the exclamation, "O, that Ishmael might live before thee!"

If, then, you would be thus honored of God, make

it the paramount daily purpose in your house to secure the enthronement of God in your children's hearts. If, too, you would have your prayer in behalf of your child succeed, like that of the Almighty's friend, let it be accompanied with the most constant, and yet most self-despising and creature-renouncing efforts to train him up for God.

We will adduce only another instance from the Scripture, in order to show how God regards and how he rewards the interest of a parent for the salvation of his children. No man has been honored in the word of God with higher commendations than the patriarch Job. He is described as a man perfect and upright, fearing God and eschewing evil: "there was none other like him in all the earth," in the judgment of the Omniscient and Holy One. Yet we see the interest manifested by this approved saint, in the sanctification and salvation of his children, by his offering a burnt-offering for each, upon occasion of their attending a feast; and that, too, in consequence of no report of outward misbehavior, but because this spiritually-minded man feared, "lest his sons had sinned and cursed God in their hearts."

The promises, too, Christian brethren, are, according to St. Peter, "to you and to your children." If, then, you despise not the very provisions of the covenant, see to it that you desire and seek, in every scriptural way, the salvation of your children's souls. Let no earthly schemes and wishes in your child's behalf, compete for a single moment, or in any particular, with your efforts to promote his spiritual and everlasting interests. Expose not his soul to destruc-

tion for the improvement of his mind, or in order to teach him how he should sit or stand, or how he may gracefully enter or leave a drawing-room. Surround him not with temptations to worldliness and sin, because honors and emoluments hold out their glittering baits. Be certified, that every other aim and prospect are made scripturally subservient to his gaining a heavenly crown. In your private, as well as public walk—in the sentiments which you utter and put in practice under your own roof, if your child adopt your views and follow in your course, let these bring him peace at the last. Let the constant wishes of your heart—which in the ear of God are your real prayers, whatever be the words which flow from your mouths—let these prefer the life of your son's spirit even to that of his body, and be ready to rejoice if he breathe his last in the arms of Jesus. Let your desires for his salvation be subordinate to only *one* thing in heaven or on earth. But be sure, as you aim to be holy and accepted in your efforts for his good, that your wishes, even for his everlasting peace, be submitted to the will and glory of our God. Let every word of instruction and exhortation that drops from your lips with this high mark in view—every work that you undertake—every prayer that you offer for this object, be begun, continued, and ended, because God hath instituted the ties which subsist between you and your children, in order to promote his own glory by their salvation. And if, contrary to God's general rule, which is to adopt into his own family the children of his sons and daughters, as Jacob took Ephraim and Manasseh for his own—if he

see fit, for his own glory and to prove his sovereignty, to show in the fruit of your body, that there are first which shall be last; if, while he receive the children of outcasts, he bless not to the salvation of your child's soul the means which you faithfully use, sorrow not without hope, like the man after God's own heart in Absalom's case; say rather, with this saint in his more spiritual mood: "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good;" with our Lord and Master himself, qualify and withdraw whatever was not consistent with the purposes and glory of God, and say: "Father, not my will, but thine be done."

We allude not, Christian parents, to this necessary subserviency in your efforts for your children's everlasting good, to the will and glory of our God, to depress your spirits, but rather to insure success, by pointing out the way in which alone you can gain the needed help and blessing of that great glorifier of Jesus, the Holy Ghost. In whose hands, too, would you prefer the matter of your child's salvation to be placed; your own, or God's? Whose grace and power are alone sufficient effectually to begin and accomplish this great work? And what promises could be more encouraging than those which you meet with in the grateful task of promoting God's glory by the salvation of your child?

"In the morning, then, sow thy seed; in the evening withhold not thy hand; thou knowest not whether shall prosper this or that." While with Abraham you command your children after you in the way of the Lord, be with him scripturally aware, that the Holy Ghost alone imparteth life, and let the constant desire

of your heart, and the frequent utterance of your lips be, with the simple substitution of your child's name for that of Hagar's son: "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" In due time you shall reap, if you faint not. Though like Ishmael, for years, he mock while others pray, yet the promised blessing shall be his; he, too, shall be led, with weeping and supplications; at the feet of him whom his sins have pierced, the Spirit of grace shall be poured upon his soul, and with one heart and one mouth, parent and child, like brethren, shall glorify their common Father and God.

A brief application of our subject to the object before us, will now close this discourse. The God of Abraham hath raised up in these latter days, for the help of the spiritual seed of his earthly friend, in their endeavors and prayers to obtain eternal life for their children, who naturally, like Ishmael, are outcasts from the household of faith—he hath raised up, I say, for their assistance in this blessed work, the institution of the Sunday-school. How many evangelical truths, Christian brethren, are by this system of lay-preaching brought before the minds of your little ones—applied, too, to the soul of each by personal address; the Spirit, likewise, having been previously supplicated in faith to break up the fallow ground of the child's heart for the reception of the Gospel seed! What opportunities does the preparation of the Sunday lesson in the week afford, for you to instruct and interest your children's minds in spiritual things! We trust that, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, you faithfully use this weapon, which the Captain of Salvation hath put in your hands, to guard

your child against his spiritual foes ; and that, so far as all proper appliances at home can produce the end, he enters the school, on every Lord's day, prepared in mind and heart to receive a blessing from God through his teacher's lips ; and that you follow him with Abraham's prayer : " O that Ishmael might live before thee ! Sure we are, that among the imperfect instrumentalities of grace on earth, none is better adapted to prove an efficient help in training up your little ones for God, than the Sunday-school which has been organized in our beloved church ; and which, notwithstanding many reverses with which it has been threatened during the past year, nevertheless, under its devoted superintendents, and, we would trust, universally faithful teachers, has not, at any previous period, presented a more flourishing appearance, as was generally conceded, than at its late anniversary celebration. The pupils have not sensibly diminished, notwithstanding the incorporation of the Branch School with the original institution under this roof. The scholars may be estimated, in round numbers, as amounting in the various departments to 750 ; and in every branch, from the Infant-school to the Bible-class, is under what may certainly, by the present speaker, be styled, without arrogance, an incomparable state of discipline and success.

Deep interest has been felt and exhibited, throughout the entire school, in the support of a faithful and zealous minister, who has gone from our midst to labor for Christ in a foreign and Pagan land ; and in conjunction with the society of ladies in our church, the children have agreed to raise for this object the sum of

\$500. It affords me pleasure to state that the first year's salary of this missionary, which will not be due until January, 1847, together with \$80 for the education of four children in the African Mission Schools, and a like sum towards the support of Mr. and Mrs. Hill, in Greece, have either been paid to the Foreign Committee of our Church, or are now in hand, ready to be forwarded at an early day. While, then, our school receives, perhaps, annually from you with one hand, some \$350 for its own support, it is delightful to see it raising within itself, and disbursing with the other, about a like sum to distribute among distant and perishing souls, the bread of life which came down from heaven. Thus, while your contributions supply your own children and many of the ignorant and destitute around with the means of sustaining and enlightening themselves, in one body, they likewise insure an organization which remits about an equal amount to spiritually uncultivated portions of our Lord's field, the world. And our school may therefore be likened to a fertile meadow, which hath springs within itself, and transmits, without any loss, streams equal to those which it receives from a neighboring fountain to gladden the desert, and make it blossom as the garden of the Lord.

But, dear friends, while this view of the operations of our school presents a most gratifying picture, and while it is pleasing to behold the order and harmony that pervade the whole, and while it is inspiring to hear our Lord's hosannas sung by so many of the young; yet in all that our school receives and gives—in all the instruction that is imparted—in all the ver-

bal praises that are offered, we see and hear only what is outward. These, in their best estate, constitute only the letter which killeth: where, brethren, is the Spirit that giveth life?

At our last confirmation, nine from the female department of the Sunday-school were thought fit, by your late excellent pastor, to renew their solemn baptismal vows, and in their own name to make a profession of Christ before the world. Of late, no case of inquiry or conversion has been reported throughout the school. Christian parents, we would not countenance impatience in the work of the Lord; we would encourage you to steadfastness, with the hope that you yet will reap—but we would faithfully warn you, withhold not the perhaps bare and ready arm of the Lord, by putting off in your expectations the reception of spiritual blessings by your children's souls. Remember, "now is the accepted time;" now is the day of salvation for all, the young included with the rest. The breath of your at present impenitent, unbelieving, and condemned children is in their nostrils. If summoned to-day before the bar of God, where would their souls appear?

Not only, then, continue to support us by your contributions, in our efforts for your children's good; but further us by your example and entire influence at home. Above all, quicken these dead means of grace, by offering from a *righteous* heart, with the simple substitution of your child's name for that of Hagar's son, this prayer of the Almighty's friend: "O that Ishmael might live before thee!"

## SERMON XIV.

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### THE RIGHTEOUSNESS REQUIRED IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

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Matt. v. 20.

“EXCEPT YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALL EXCEED THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, YE SHALL IN NO CASE ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.”

Who, then, of us would be willing not to be allowed in any case to enter into the kingdom of heaven? Yet he who is the truth, and who sits upon the throne of that kingdom, assures us in the text, that “except” we comply with a certain condition, “except” we attain a specific requirement, we “shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” What, then, is that condition? what is that requirement? “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God.” Such is the law of Zion, as enacted and declared by him who has had his throne set upon that holy hill. We submit, too, brethren, that this requirement of a very superior righteousness on our part, by the Mediatorial King, as a term of admission into that kingdom of heaven whose subjects are to enjoy the most blessed fellowship with God, is not arbitrary, is not unreasonable.

On this point, the law written on every man's moral nature corresponds with the law written in our text. We all know and feel, that the one with whom we have to do is absolutely spotless and unfathomable in his holiness and justice. The bare thought, too, of the king of heaven being in intimate and everlasting communion with guilty, or even impure and selfish subjects, is rejected as blasphemous by every well-regulated mind, whether it supposes itself as possessed or not of that righteousness which will be required in order to be admitted to this blessed relationship to God. Both sinners and saints, when brought into contact with God, and thrown upon their own resources, shrink in dismay from the interview. The wicked are described in the last day, as calling upon the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them from the face of him who sits upon the throne.

The most evangelical of the prophets, when favored with an emblematical representation of God's majesty and holiness in the temple, as the seraphims, covering their faces with their wings, cried "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts;" and the very posts of the door became sensible of his awful presence, and moved, and the house was filled with smoke—even Isaiah, under these circumstances, said, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the king! Even the holy elect angels are revealed as veiling their faces, and the heavens are declared not to be clean in his sight. Every fallen man, therefore, as he contemplates his appointed meeting with this king, is deeply moved, and asks,

“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God?” Let every such earnest inquirer hear the reply of God’s incarnate Son: “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Under pain and penalty, therefore, of certain exclusion from the kingdom of heaven, we are here required to compare our attainments in righteousness with those of the Scribes and Pharisees. It is also expressly intimated that their righteousness was deficient, and that unless what they lacked be supplied in our case, the fearful sentence of eternal banishment from God’s presence shall be pronounced on our souls.

It is thus our present object to assist you, beloved, in arriving at a proper understanding of the righteousness of the Scribe and Pharisee, that you may all furnish yourselves with what they needed. Three remarks respecting it will answer our purpose; and the first of these is: That the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was *the best which fallen man can ever attain in a state of nature*. This assertion may sound very strangely in the face of all those fearful declarations and denunciations against the Scribes and Pharisees which abound in the New Testament. But it should be remembered, that these were uttered by one who seeth not as man seeth, and that they were inspired by one who requires to be served in spirit and in truth. Moreover, our Saviour acknowledges that the Scribes and the Pharisees outwardly appeared righteous unto men. There were none who could compare with them in reputation for sanctity; and

their efforts to be holy were evidently very laborious and persevering. Our Lord speaks of them, upon one occasion, as "compassing sea and land," and St. Paul represents them as "going about to establish their own righteousness."

But you will ask, perhaps, How can the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees be the best human righteousness; for was it not merely outward? Nor can it be denied, that the divine prophet compared them to "whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness." Our whole chapter, too, seems to have been designed to convict them of merely external piety. The exceeding broad and spiritual interpretations which our Lord in this, his first sermon, put upon the requirements of the divine law, showing that purity of heart and poverty of spirit would be expected of all who should see God and possess the kingdom of heaven, were so much more exalted than their standard, that they were proved to fall far short. Our immediate context, too, cut off every hope which they might previously have entertained of the completeness or sufficiency of their righteousness, by informing them that they would stand in danger when they were tried by the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," if they had ever been angry with a man without having what God would regard as a cause; and that if, under the impulse of such anger, they had ventured to call another a fool, they would be in danger of hell-fire.

And the divine interpretation of the seventh commandment was in these words: "Whosoever looketh

on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Now, when desires are thus construed into acts before God's tribunal—when a man who even wishes what is forbidden, is regarded and treated as a culprit—were the Scribes and Pharisees peculiar in being convicted, under such an interpretation of the law, as having only an outward righteousness? Who can say, "I am pure from my sin," when tried by such inward tests? Can the most moral and upright man in the whole circle of our acquaintance set up such a claim for himself? If he is not conscious of having transgressed some of the commandments of God, even in a thought or wish of his heart, are there not others which he must remember that he has thus violated? What, then, will he urge in his defence, under this enactment, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all?" Surely, then, it does not militate against our claiming for the Scribes and Pharisees a righteousness equal to any which an unconverted man can attain, when we admit that their righteousness was simply outward.

But you will, perhaps, ask again: Were not the Pharisees absolutely *guilty of making the commandments of God of none effect by their traditions?* and how, then, can their righteousness be better than that of other men? It must be admitted, that great was that "hardness of heart" which required Moses, as their civil governor, to permit them to put away their wives by simply giving to them a bill of divorcement; when, as their inspired prophet, he had taught them that God had made man and wife one flesh. Whose moral

sense, too, is not shocked, when he learns that these expounders of God's law, in violation of the fifth commandment, which required them to honor their parents, permitted their followers to escape its solemn obligation, by simply saying to their father and mother, "Corban, or it is a gift by whatever you may be profited by me?" But, without in the least extenuating its enormity, we would yet ask, Is it not a universal tendency among men who are relying upon their own righteousness for acceptance with God, to lower the demands of the divine law to a level with their own infirmities, and to put such a construction upon them as to be consistent with their own sins?

Point out the true meaning of God's requirements to the most highly-esteemed moralist or unconverted man in any community, whether he be within or without the church, and the almost uniform answer that you will receive is, if such a construction be the right one, who, then, can be saved? Every corrupt, fallen creature, who is depending upon his own character for salvation, must, as a matter of necessity, degrade the law of God to some standard which he is able to reach, or he must immediately renounce all trust in his own goodness. When comparing, therefore, the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees with that of other men who are not in Christ, it is not to be despised because they narrowed and lowered the meaning of God's commandments.

But you may still further say: Were not the Scribes and Pharisees even *hypocritical*? Does not our Lord denounce a woe against them as hypocrites? Did he not warn his disciples to "beware of the leaven of the

Pharisees, which was hypocrisy? and in face of this, is it maintained that they were better than others? But we will venture to ask: Were the Scribes and Pharisees peculiar among unconverted men, in this respect? Let not groundless and false charges be brought against any, but let us understand terms. By *hypocrite*, at least in the present connection, we do not mean a man who is all the while conscious that he is acting a deceitful part, who always feels that he is not what he appears to be, and who shapes his course with the express purpose of making others think that he is better than he is. It may well be doubted, whether there is such an abidingly conscious villain upon the face of the earth. No, brethren; human nature, in its very worst specimen, is unable, for a constancy, to remain in such a consciously depraved state as this. We spontaneously forget what our true character is; we readily persuade ourselves that we are what we seem to be. "We flatter ourselves in our own eyes, until our iniquity be found to be hateful." Let a man, however, only stop and think; let him sometimes ask himself the questions, Am I what I appear to be, in all respects? Would I be willing that others should know what my feelings and wishes often are? Do I not wish others to think that I am really feeling what I appear to be feeling? Is not my righteousness merely outward? Am I not, to all intents and purposes, living under a mask, although I generally forget that I am doing so? Has not this self-deception and internal hypocrisy proceeded so far that I sometimes flatter myself that even the Searcher of Hearts has the same opinion of me that those who

judge by the outward appearance have been made to entertain? He must be very ignorant of himself, and absolutely seared in his conscience, who would not writhe under such a self-examination as this.

Now, you will remember that it was no mere fellow-creature, but one who knew what was in man, who brought the charges of hypocrisy against the Scribes and Pharisees, which have been alluded to; and we must be persuaded that he accused them in this way, not because of any singularity in their case, but because they were an organized band of unconverted church-members, who were trying to be good in their own strength, because they were the fair representatives of natural men, whether in or out of the church, who "trust in themselves that they are righteous."

But some one may inquire here: Are not the true children of God, if there be any such in the world, brought under the same condemnation? Are not even they hypocrites in this sense? Do they let their thoughts and feelings be known? Do not they appear to be better than they are? We answer, that in a certain sense, this is true. The very best of them have countless desires and feelings which it might well make them blush to own. Nay, some of them may be tempted to act, for awhile, the part of conscious hypocrites, and may be compelled to mourn in secret over even this diabolical sin. But we are not advocating the propriety or duty of proclaiming upon the housetop every secret delinquency or wrong feeling. This, in our present state of existence, would be the part of a madman. Nor is this necessary, in order

to shield us from the charge of hypocrisy. All that can be expected is, that we should be habitually honest before God; confessing, in all its enormity, every feeling before him in whose sight it has been entertained, and never daring to rely for acceptance at his hand, upon any pretended goodness of our own.

Before men, too, the disciples of Christ are ready to acknowledge, in the gross, but yet most humbly and honestly, and with no covert purpose, that in truth and before God, they are miserable sinners, however saintly they may appear to be in man's sight. Here, then, is an essential difference between believers and those who have never been properly convicted of their sins; and, therefore, believers are not habitual hypocrites, in the scriptural use of that term. They do differ from Scribes and Pharisees, and all natural and unconverted men; for these last trust in—they have nothing else in which they can trust, but, their own righteousness. And all fallen creatures whose reliance is on their own goodness—all who occupy such a position, either in God's or man's sight, must necessarily be hypocrites in the sense explained; they would at once be driven from this ground, if they did not live under a mask; if they did not persuade themselves that not only man but God thinks of them just as they seem to be.

While, however, there is this difference between the disciples of Christ and the impenitent, yet, as we have seen, there is no essential difference between individual unconverted men in this respect; and therefore we cannot admit, that among mere natural characters, there is anything peculiar to Scribes and Phari-

sees, because, in a scriptural sense, they must be regarded as hypocritical. On the contrary, brethren, Scribes and Pharisees have a righteousness altogether beyond that of the mass of their unconverted brethren. Their righteousness is fully equal to that standard which they set up according to their own interpretation of God's law. "Touching the righteousness, (which is comprised in their interpretation of the law,) they are blameless." What zeal, too, do many of them manifest in furthering the purposes of the church! They tithe even mint, anise, and cummin! How long and repeated are their public prayers! How scrupulous and exact in every observance! Not only in their morality, seemly and imposing; but they are clothed with a church righteousness. All that unconverted men can make of either natural or revealed religion, they have made of both.

The righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees is thus the very best righteousness which natural men, under the most favorable circumstances, can ever acquire. When we have said this, no doubt many will think that we are bound to regard this righteousness as saving, notwithstanding its merely outward, mistaken, short-coming and hypocritical character. For what more, they will be ready to ask, can God justly require of a man than that he shall do as well as he can? To this question we shall only reply by another: "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" and we shall close all that is to be said under this head, by repeating the words of the text: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter

into the kingdom of heaven;" except your righteousness shall exceed all that an unconverted man can attain, either in or out of the church, ye cannot be saved.

Our two remaining remarks may well be anticipated. We would, therefore, only briefly say, in the second place, that the righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees is *not that which the law of God requires*. As much might be inferred from what has been already pointed out in its character. For could the Heart-searcher be satisfied with a mere outward conformity to his requirements? Can the Unchangeable One be contented with what comes short of the standard which he has once set up? Can he, who is upright and true, be pleased with what is necessarily hypocritical? Accordingly we read, that "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;" that "there is none righteous, no, not one;" and that, "by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified."

So, far, therefore, brethren, as the law of God is concerned, we are cut off, not only from the expectation of being justified altogether from compliance with it, but from even being justified in part by our obedience to it. The only tones which the law utters, when even the best fallen man looks to it in his strait, are those of unmitigated threatening and cursing. So that partial conformity to it must not form any portion of the ground upon which we stand before God's bar. On whatever else we may rely, to supply the deficiency in our own title through the law, the simple fact of depending upon our own character and attainments, in the least, will vitiate every other plea. St.

Paul says, in reference to the position which he occupied here, "not having mine own righteousness;" he did not carry his own character with him before the divine tribunal, to form either a sufficient or a partial plea; he had divested himself of it entirely; he had cast it overboard.

Thus, Scribes and Pharisees, and all who, like them, trust in whole or in part upon what they are in themselves, are cut off by the law of God from every hope. It is mere delusion, too, for them to expect the first sight of God in heaven, to transform them into that spotless image of the divine character which the law requires, so that they will satisfy the claims of the law hereafter, if they do not now. For none shall be allowed, in any case, to enter into the kingdom of heaven, and to attain such a sight of God, unless their righteousness shall exceed, beforehand, the righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees. It is only the accepted sons of God who shall be made wholly like Jesus, by seeing him as he is. This glorious promise and expectation are for such alone; so that Scribes and Pharisees, and all who with them trust in any way or degree upon what they themselves are, do not satisfy the demands of the law, and are brought by it under condemnation.

Let it not, therefore, be supposed, that under our previous head, any absolute praise of these Jewish churchmen was intended. It was only when compared with the character and conduct of other unconverted men, who endeavor to be good, that we shielded them from indiscriminate censure. When, however, they are judged by God's law, they are proved to be not only

short-coming, but positively and deeply criminal. How fearful are the denunciations with which they were met from the mouth of the truthful, although meek Saviour of the world! "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," was his frequent personal address; and the deceptive arts which their very attempts, as fallen creatures, to be righteous in themselves, rendered necessary, he threatened with "deeper damnation." So that the righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees was really worse than the notorious sins of publicans; and the appalling general conclusion is thus reached, that a self-righteous moralist or churchman will meet with more severe judgment from God than the open transgressor.

Such, then, is the estimate which *the law of God* forms of the righteousness declared to be insufficient in our text.

But we proceed now, in the last place, to remark, that the righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees is *not that righteousness which the Gospel provides*. This position, we know, is diametrically opposed to the views and hopes which all such characters, both under the Old and under the New Dispensations of Christ's Church, entertain. They are ready to admit, that all that they are, and all that they do, would be of no avail, if it were not under the direction of the Gospel, and in view of the promises of the Gospel. "We profess to live," say they, "under the institutions and appointments of God's evangelical love and grace. The revelation of God's moral law itself was made in mercy, to enlighten our dark souls, and to provide us with a standard at which we should aim. All the

ordinances of the church were established as helps, and means of grace, for our fallen souls. Circumcision, and the Passover, and the entire temple worship in the Jewish church; and prayer and preaching, and baptism, and confirmation, and the communion, and the various services in our church—all were and are derived from God. They are efficacious only through his assistance and favor. Nay, they are rendered important, not by what they are in themselves, but in consequence of the life and death of that incarnate God, whom the Jewish believers expected as their Messiah, and whom we know as one already come. It is for his sake, that our moral and church righteousness are respected of God, and that we hope to be accepted in them."

Thus, brethren, Scribes and Pharisees by no means renounce all reference to Christ. On the contrary, it is their supposed connection with him which, they maintain, imparts a value to their moral and church righteousness, which they would not otherwise possess. And it is because their moral and church services are mixed, in their apprehensions, with Christ's sufferings and obedience, that they hope to be accepted in what they are and do. It was thus with the Scribes and Pharisees in the old church; it is thus with those who are like them in ours. They are, too, astonished and indignant when it is insisted, according to the plainest teachings of God's word, that this is not the righteousness which the Gospel provides for guilty, fallen souls, and that, notwithstanding all their zeal for God, they are consequently still without the Gospel pale.

But, brethren, whether men will hear or forbear, let us uphold the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, in all its purity. Can it be, then, we ask, that the office and work of the Only-begotten of the holy and just God, are to render such a righteousness as we have seen that of the Scribes and Pharisees to be, acceptable to his Father? to make God satisfied with that which, in its best estate, and in its highest attainments, is necessarily outward, short-coming, and hypocritical? The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sins; it washes them away, and removes them from us; but it does not wash the sins themselves, and make them white and holy, so that they can form our righteousness with God. No, the righteousness of a fallen man, whether in or out of the church, is itself sinful; and though it be washed in the blood of an incarnate God, can never be purified. All our righteousnesses are filthy rags: and not one thread of them must form part of either warp or woof of that robe of righteousness in which a fallen soul appears acceptable in God's sight. The righteousness which the Gospel provides, and which gains an entrance into the kingdom of heaven, far exceeds not only that which a fallen man can acquire, but even that which the holiest angel possesses; it would be degraded and soiled by any mixture with ours; there would be a garment of light, inconceivable and full of glory, intertwined with black. It is none other than the righteousness of God himself. It is the pure righteousness of Christ, as set forth in the Gospel, made ours by simple faith, and in which we walk with God in white, as those who are worthy. "Not having," says St. Paul, "mine own

righteousness, which is of the law, (not only that law by which the moral universe is governed, but that law by which the church is regulated, and which consists in circumcision and keeping of the feasts and fasts, in baptism and the Lord's supper, and such like—not having these righteousnesses,) but that which is by the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." And again: "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Since such, then, is the glorious righteousness which, without mixture, is required at our hands, well may our Lord say: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Oh! brethren, we exhort you, not to discontinue your prayers, either in private or in public, nor your self-denying imitation of Jesus' sinless life, nor your devout attendance at every service and ordinance of the church, nor your works of faith and labors of love: nay, abound in these, to the praise of him who hath called you to such hope and glory; but repudiate and curse them when, as they are in themselves, or as they may be supposed to be, washed in Christ's blood, or inspired by God's Spirit, they would offer themselves to you as your righteousness with God.

Come, brethren, convicted deeply of the guilt of all your righteousness, as well as of your sins, and cast it on Jesus crucified, as your sacrifice with God. Come naked, and be clothed by faith with Jesus' robe; and you shall have an abundant entrance administered to you into the kingdom of God. Thus clad, you shall

live in peace with God, and in joyful hope of this blessed consummation. No exception against your entrance into the kingdom of heaven will be made; but, as “the ransomed of the Lord, you shall come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy shall be upon your heads: you shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”



## SERMON XV.

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REFLECTIONS ON HAZAEL'S CASE; OR, THE WORST SINS  
NATURAL TO MAN.

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2 Kings viii. 13.

“AND HAZAEL SAID, BUT WHAT, IS THY SERVANT A DOG, THAT HE  
SHOULD DO THIS GREAT THING?”

THE striking history of the Syrian, who addressed these words to the prophet of the Lord, is familiar to most readers of the Bible. We must, however, remind ourselves now of its leading events, as we propose to draw instruction from his case.

It would seem, then, that years before the transaction in our chapter, Elijah had been ordered by his God to anoint Hazael, as the one whom it was designed to elevate to the throne of Syria. Such was the particularity of the directions which the prophet received, both as regards time and place, for the discharge of this commission, that no reasonable doubt can be entertained it was performed with all possible dispatch, although the fact of its occurrence is not recorded. It is conjectured as probable, that the ceremony produced but little impression on Hazael's mind, as he was then young and obscure, and there seemed no prospect of his ever supplanting his powerful royal master, Benhadad. But the progress of years

had effected quite a revolution in the affairs of this youthful Syrian. He had now risen high in favor at court, and was the most intimate and trusted servant of his sovereign. It may well be supposed, that his very situation begot aspirations to which he had formerly been a stranger. And now, that he had been intrusted by the king, who was sick, as his confidential messenger to Elisha, to inquire whether he should be restored to health, it is certain that the subject of the kingdom, as renewed in his conversation with this successor of Elijah, led to the most treasonable designs and acts on his part. He approached our prophet then with a magnificent present, and in the most respectful way, "came and stood before him, and said, Thy son Benhadad, king of Syria, hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?" "And Elisha said unto him, Go, say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover;" that is, there is nothing necessarily fatal in the character of thy disease.

You will here note, brethren, the designed ambiguity of the prophet's reply. "Howbeit," continues the holy man, "the Lord hath shown me that he shall surely die." When Elisha had delivered this inspired answer to the Syrian courtier, "he settled his countenance steadfastly" upon him, "until Hazael was ashamed." And then, as if overcome through the emotions that were excited by the events which he beheld with his prophetic eye, it is stated that "the man of God wept." "And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord?" "And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel;" and then specifies the dreadful cruelties which Hazael

should afterwards inflict upon the people of God, and how he would desolate their land. "And Hazael said," in the words of our text, "but what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" This exclamation hath its own intrinsic force. The nature of the dog remains unchanged. He is still degraded to the vilest place, and he is still set to offices of blood. The name of this animal the Scriptures use to designate persons of the worst and most savage propensities and habits. "*Dogs*," says our Saviour in the Psalms, when speaking of the crowd which mocked him, as he hung upon the cross, "dogs have compassed me." When cautioning against those who would meet any attempt by others for their spiritual and eternal good, with contempt and abuse, Jesus likewise says, in his sermon on the Mount, "Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." And St. John, describing those upon whom the gates of the New Jerusalem shall be closed on the last day, says: "Without are *dogs*, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

It is here plain, how sensibly Hazael was hurt by hearing the cause of Elisha's grief; and with what sorrowful indignation he repelled the idea of even the possibility of the prophet's fears being realized. But Hazael's exclamation of horror at the mention of his future wickedness, made but little impression on the man of God. He dismissed his self-ignorant companion, with the simple and sad announcement: "The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over

Syria." What different effect, as has been well remarked, did this prophetic intelligence produce upon Hazael's mind, from that which a similar assurance wrought upon the man after God's own heart. The latter waits upon God's Providence to fulfil God's word; and even when Saul, whom he faithfully served, and who, notwithstanding, was pursuing him with the most unrelenting and deadly hostility, was delivered into his hands, he yet suffers him to escape unhurt. But no sooner had the Syrian courtier separated from Elisha, than he conjures up a false report of the prophet's answer to the king, saying, "He told me that thou shouldest surely recover." And on the morrow, he determines to accomplish his own predicted promotion in the most diabolical way. He entered the apartment of his sick and confiding king, and spread over his face a thick wet cloth, "so that he died;" "and Hazael reigned in his stead." Having opened a way for himself to the throne by such a treacherous and deadly deed, there can be no surprise at his being the agent of all the mischief which Elisha had foreseen.

We read in the historians and prophets of Scripture, a literal fulfilment by Hazael of all the wicked cruelties of which, when he was foretold, he exclaimed: "But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?"

Such, brethren, is the striking history of Hazael. But it would ill have become the Scripture to record, or us, in our present responsible circumstances, as its minister, to have rehearsed these particulars of his life, if they were singular in their nature, and had no instructive application to ourselves. My hearers, Ha-

zael's case is not isolated. It serves to illustrate that most alarming Scriptural truth: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Some, no doubt, will be shocked at such a monster of iniquity being held up as an illustration of human nature. But, then, was not Hazael himself equally indignant at being supposed capable of his subsequent crimes? Ah! herein lies the hopelessness of man's case. He will not seek a remedy, because he knows not the extent and alarming nature of his disease. And many causes combine to hide the startling truth from his mind. That cause, however, which lies at the root of all the rest, is this: Man's fallen condition, while he remains in this earthly state, consists not so much in what he does, as in what he is; not in the actual enormities which he does commit, but in being capable of and meet for the worst sins.

Now, it will perhaps reveal to us, in some measure, what man is capable of, if we remark, first, that no one is duly aware how closely united, as cause and effect, the heart and the life are. Earthly circumstances and restraints throw such a barrier in the way of the indulgence of those bad feelings which we are conscious of, that unless the wish ripen into absolute resolution, and even act, we are disposed to doubt its strength, and to extenuate, if not really deny, its criminality. Let each, however, but honestly accuse himself of such wrong desires, as he must remember himself at some time to have been subject to; let him candidly search out and confess the utterly selfish and worldly reasons which hindered him at these periods.

from plunging into open sin; and surely he will begin to suspect his heart of being such as the Saviour describes it, the source of "evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." But, though man judgeth according to the outward appearance, let us not forget that God looketh at the heart; nay, that "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Who, then, when thus tested, will be indignant when we assert, that all men by nature are Hazael's in truth, and before the eye of God?

But if those who were ready to regard Hazael as an extraordinary instance of depravity, are thus silenced when appealing to their hearts, we say, let "him who is without sin, cast the first stone." What additional cause will appear for all being included under a like condemnation, when we suggest the further undeniable truth, that even wishes themselves are but a very partial mode of judging of our fallen state. The circumstances in which we are placed in God's restraining Providence have the blessed effect, not only of checking the exhibition in outward conduct of evil fruit, but even of preventing the growth of sinful weeds in our heart, though its soil might be well suited to their spontaneous growth.

We are so constituted, dear friends, as to cultivate generally only such desires as are adapted to our situations in life. See how Hazael avoided the sin of treason, even in thought, so far as we are aware, when, in youth and obscurity, the crown was first promised him by the prophet. But when he was elevated in rank, and approached nearer the throne—when the splendors and attractions of royalty were continually

spread before his eye, they brought out what was buried alive in his heart, and he became the treacherous murderer of his confiding royal patron. When the temptations of power and ambition, too, to add to his empire assailed him, he waded through seas of blood.

A fact in modern history will serve also to confirm our position. Before a literary association of young men, during the last century, it is stated, that a dissertation against "capital punishment" was read, which excited, by the humanity of its sentiments and the cogency of its reasoning, unanimous applause. That production is now chiefly remarkable, in having had for its author a man who, not in the ardor of battle, but, with the most deliberate and inexorable unfeelingness, made Paris and France to flow with blood. It need only be said, that we allude to Robespierre.

"The heart is deceitful above all things." With the utmost ease, in its ingenuity, it deceives the man himself. It will allow, nay it will cause us to shudder with horror at the bare recital of crimes, of which our circumstances absolutely forbid the perpetration. It will thus adorn itself with a species of factitious righteousness, while it extenuates or wholly excuses the soul in indulging in those temptations which for the present surround it. The sins of childhood are no doubt frequently perpetrated with an undisguised disapprobation of those which elder brothers and sisters commit. Those, again, just entering upon life—free, however, from its responsibilities and trials—amiably engage in pursuits and pleasures which be-

tray forgetfulness of God, with an utter horror of that absorbing selfishness and covetousness which are so obvious in many heads of families. These last, in their turn, loathe the complaining fretfulness of the aged. And these, too, censure the ingratitude and forgetfulness of the young.

Alas! my friends, we are engrossed with others' faults; our virtuous indignation is aroused against those sins to which we are not tempted, while we go on, drinking in with greediness the iniquity which lies in our way, and which is suitable to our condition or tastes. But the fallen heart is in its nature one and the same. Its soil needs only a change of temperature. We require only an alteration of our outward condition, to bear feelings and wishes and conduct, which now seem foreign to our character. Hazael said, "But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" which he afterwards engaged in with the most enthusiastic ardor. But the sophistry of the deceitful heart is even greater yet. It not only will draw distinctions between wishes and deeds—it not only will palliate our own sinful desires and indulgences, by exciting deep indignation against those which are not suited to our case, but it will even blot out from the tablet of memory the record of what the hands have done or the tongue has said. "Who can recount his errors?" Who has not forgotten the sins which he has absolutely committed? Who, if reported as capable of perpetrating what he may often have done, would not, with the most self-deceiving indignation, exclaim: "What, am I a dog, that I should do this great thing?"

“The heart is deceitful above all things.” Neither would it be so “desperately wicked,” if it were not characterized by this pre-eminent deceit. Look, brethren, at the short but instructive history of the Fall. He who then innoculated us with his spirit, is called “the deceiver.” And does not the mode of his attack and triumph over our first parents, prove that the Scripture has justly branded him with the name? When Eve was brought to believe that she should not die in spite of God’s threat, she, in being deceived, imbibed the spirit of the deceiver, and brought herself and children under the curse of a deceitful heart. So that now, notwithstanding our fallen state, and proofs of it in God’s word, and in our life, both on the right hand and the left, we yet, when suspected of any wickedness like that which might be supposed to be derived from our natural father, the evil one, are ready to cry out, “What, are we dogs, that we should do this great thing?”

Ah! then, let us not suffer such deceitful witnesses as our hearts to bear testimony in this matter. Let us go to him to whose eye all things are open and naked—to whom even the secrets of our deceitful hearts are known, and learn what our fallen character and condition are. Hear, now, without qualification or reserve, God’s true testimony: “Both Jews and Gentiles, they are all under sin; as it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good; no, not one. Their throat is an open

sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes."

Such is the charge of Paul, who spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, against every partaker of human nature. And now, are you ready to exclaim with Hazael: "But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should be, or do, anything like this?" We mean not, my unconverted friend, to bring any charge respecting this or that particular sin. This is not within our power, and, if it were, it is not our province. But we insist, that such you *are*. Your temporal, as well as your spiritual and eternal interests, are with us objects of sincere solicitude. And it is our earnest desire, respecting each of our flock, that he may be kept from such sins as will bring down on him even the contempt and punishment of men. But in faithfulness we warn you, that so long as you continue without Christ, you are without any sufficient security against even those transgressions which are generally denounced in this fallen world. By nature, our souls are as truly under the curse as the earth on which we live. Thorns and briars doth it bring forth; and so sin is the spontaneous product of our natural hearts. It may be, which God grant for your own sake and that of your friends, that you may be restrained from wishing, much less committing any sins, which will deprive you of the sympathy and countenance of fellow-men. But it becomes me, as the guardian of

your soul, to warn you, that if it remain in its present state, it is of that soil which bears this manner of fruit; and that if you die, and escape the strife and condemnation of the tongues of men, yet you carry into the next world, in your unconverted soul, a fit companion for wicked spirits and the enemies of God. You shall be left "without," "where are dogs and everything that defileth."

What, then, you need, is not to prevent this or that little stream from issuing out of your heart. You need the fountain to be made pure and sweet. It is true that you need your actual sins to be forgiven; but, above all, you need your original sin—that of your nature—those sins of which you are capable, and for which you are ready; to be pardoned, and washed away in Jesus' blood: you need the deceitful and desperately wicked heart to be changed by the good Spirit of God. Oh! then, when God charges you in his word with sin, say not with Hazael, "But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Own your guilt; feel burdened with its weight. Look unto Jesus, who remits sin, paying its debt, and washing it away by his blood. He softens, too, hearts that are stony by nature, and grants repentance unto life to those who would before never weep, except over disappointments in their lusts. He leads "captivity captive," and draws by the cords of love to holiness and to himself, those who before lived under willing bondage to sin and Satan.

But our subject is not without its lesson for the most spiritually-minded man in our midst. It is true, fellow-Christian, that before you became a justified

believer, you were taught, as a preliminary, the fact of your own utter deceitfulness and wickedness. But the leaven of the old nature of self-deceit still remains, to a fearful degree, in the best on earth. And we remind you, how it worked in the man after God's own heart, and in the most ardent of all our Saviour's disciples? Oh! when we read the indignant condemnation by David of a supposed criminal to death, for an act which, however affectingly depicted by Nathan, was yet vastly less culpable than that which the Psalmist himself was habitually committing without compunction—who that thinketh he standeth, should not take heed lest he fall?

When we hear the proud and confident declaration of Peter, that “though all men should be offended because of Christ, yet would not he,” on the very night in which he denied, with oaths and curses, the Lord who was buying his soul, it surely becomes us “not to be high-minded, but fear.” Christian brethren, we would not trouble or dishearten you, in your course. Oh! there are all needed encouragements in our case. He who hath abided faithful, hath entered into covenant with our souls. In the end, true believer, success and glory shall crown your efforts, through whatever vicissitudes and tribulations, temporal or spiritual, you may enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Besides, what abundant promises there are, that disciples shall be kept from the evil that is in the world. The glory of the Saviour, and the reputation of his people, are also deeply involved in your life.

When the Lord thought to do evil to his people Israel, on account of their ill-desert, Moses approached

him with this plea: "Wherefore should the Egyptians say, For mischief didst thou bring them out?" and the wrath of the Lord, for his own name's sake, was stayed. And this is very generally a prevalent argument with God, to withhold his people from such sins as will bring offence. And, when we feel the strength and frequency of even the grossest temptations which assault the people of God—how often, too, these lead captive for awhile the soul—when we consider the numbers of Christ's professing people, and how few of them comparatively bring, by scandalous offences, religion into disrepute; and of these, again, how small is the proportion of those who have seemed to spiritual eyes, before their fall, truly converted souls:—Oh! there is abundant reason to give thanks and take courage.

But, then, brethren, notwithstanding all this and more, God looketh at the heart. He is more jealous over the real purity of his people than he is over their reputation. It needs only the desertion of Christ's Spirit, for you to act like a dog, returning to his own vomit again. Oh! then, be poor in spirit. Listen not to the whisperings of your deceitful heart, that you have so grown in grace as to be endued with some strength of your own. Real growth consists in an increased feeling of our own weakness and vile tendencies. In such weak persons, God's strength is perfected. Without Christ, you not only can do nothing good; you are not only unable, of yourselves, to think anything holy, but it needs, as we see by our Saviour's interceding prayer, God's restraining grace to keep the best disciples from the worst evil that is

in the world. And though it should humble and make us tremble, and cause us to look up with strong crying and tears to Christ; yet it should not surprise us to hear, that the most prominent and exemplary saint in the church had fallen under any of the possible temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. We exhort you, then, always approach God in this state of heart, feeling your natural proneness to the most diabolical wickedness, your entire dependence upon Christ's Spirit to sustain you therefrom. We implore you, in your intercourse with fellow-Christians and the world, let it scripturally appear that you feel yourself, in yourself, capable of the most heinous transgressions. And even with these self-humbling views, be jealous of the still lurking deceitfulness of your imperfectly sanctified heart. Not only avoid Hazael's presumptuous ignorance of self, but with David, in his best days, suspect that there is mischief lurking within that has not yet been discovered, and pray: "Search me, O God! and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" Feel, pray, live thus; and we promise you, in Christ's name and strength, power to do all things. You shall not only overcome your spiritual foes, within and without, but you shall do all those good works unto which you were created in Christ Jesus, and in which God hath before ordained that you should walk; you shall live to the praise of God's justifying and sanctifying grace on earth, and be exalted to that glory hereafter which is to be revealed in Christ.

## SERMON XVI.

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THE CASE OF JEHU CONSIDERED; OR, THE NECESSITY  
OF SINGLENESS IN ZEAL.

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2 Kings x. 16.

“COME WITH ME, AND SEE MY ZEAL FOR THE LORD.”

WHAT a dazzling sword in the hands of God, was the man who uttered these words! The time had then arrived for the threatening prophecies which had gone before, upon the family of Ahab, to be fulfilled. The blood of Naboth and the idolatries of Jezebel must now be avenged. Never was a royal house more firmly established, however. Samaria was flourishing, and Jezreel was deemed impregnable. Not only had Joram, the son of Ahab, happily succeeded his father, but his seventy brethren ensured the succession, and strengthened his own popularity. All was peace at home, and Joram's armies were victorious abroad. The king might thus well flatter himself with the prospects of an undisturbed and prosperous reign, and regard the hostile predictions of Elijah and Micaiah, the prophets of God, as the spleen of enthusiasts and malcontents. From this cloudless sky, however, God sends his deadly and unsparing bolt. Jehu was the dazzling sword by which God executed his wrathful purpose.

While Joram's army was occupying Ramoth-Gilead, from which he had retired to Jezreel to be cured of some slight wounds, Elisha, under the divine direction, commissions one of the younger prophets to hasten to the fortress, and to anoint Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, as king of Israel. When the prophetic messenger arrived, he found the man to whom he had been sent, in utter unconsciousness of the exaltation which awaited him, sitting and conversing with the other captains of the host. Almost terrified with the greatness and danger of his commission, the young prophet entered the company of these men of war, and, apparently without looking specially at any one of them, said: "I have an errand unto thee, O captain." "Unto which of all of us?" asked Jehu, who seems to have been the leading spirit of this fearful band. "And he said, To thee, O captain." Upon this announcement, the sacred historian records, that Jehu rose and retired with the prophet to an inner chamber of the house, where the box of oil was emptied on his head, and he was greeted by the prophet as the king of Israel, whom God had appointed to extirpate the wicked and idolatrous house of Ahab. No sooner was his errand thus discharged, than the prophet opened the door and fled.

Marvellous, indeed, was the reception which the intelligence of what had been done, met at the hands of Jehu's warlike companions. How apparent is the hand of God! The prophet is denounced by them as a mad fellow, before they are acquainted with the subject of his communication; but immediately upon hearing it, they are seized with the enthusiastic

determination of furthering his object. Each taking off his garment, they made with the clothes a kind of extempore throne, and placing their colleague on the heap, they "blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king." In this extraordinary method, was a most formidable conspiracy at once formed against the supremacy of Joram. We all know, too, with what resistless speed it was brought to a successful issue. Tidings of the revolt were kept from Joram by confining all within the city; and, with a chosen band, Jehu set out to discharge the deadly commission with which he had been entrusted by the Lord. As a divinely-appointed avenger, there was in him no turning aside to the right hand or the left. He rode furiously onward, making all whom he met, even Joram's messengers, follow in his train. Nor is he daunted by the presence of his royal master, who, with fatal confidence, rode out in his chariot to meet him, as he came; but, to the king's question, "Is it peace, Jehu?" replied, "What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother, Jezebel, and her witchcrafts are so many?" At this abrupt and uncompromising answer, Joram, crying to his brother-in-law, the king of Judah, who had accompanied him, "There is treachery, O Ahaziah," turned to flee. But with a strong and unerring arm, Jehu drew a bow, and drove an arrow through his body at the heart. Nor was even Ahaziah, as a probable avenger of the conspiracy, suffered to escape; for he, too, was killed in his chariot, by Jehu's servants, at their master's command.

Riding triumphantly into Jezreel, he ordered Jezebel, who upbraided him from a window of her palace,

to be thrown out by any within the house who were disposed to be on his side. By her terror-struck courtiers this was forthwith done: and the mangled body of the idolatrous and persecuting queen was, according to Elijah's prediction, devoured by the dogs. The work of vengeance, however, was but just begun. At the requisition of Jehu, the city of Samaria sent him the heads of Ahab's seventy sons. Having thus brought the kingdom into subjection, he set out from Jezreel on a visit to Samaria; and, while journeying, he found forty-two of Ahaziah's kinsmen, who were coming from Judah to see the king and queen. These, too, were slain at his command; and soon after, meeting with Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, distinguished for his temperance and strict adherence to the worship of God, he formed with him a league, and invited him to take a seat in his chariot, saying, (in the words of our text,) "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord." With what adoring wonder at the righteous judgment of God, and yet with what misgiving at the character of the instrument employed, must this upright servant of Jehovah have witnessed what immediately ensued! Under the pretext of confirming and extending the existing idolatrous religion of the State, Jehu assembled the prophets of Baal; and after they had sacrificed to their false god, he killed them all, without warning or exception, on the spot.

Having thus destroyed the seed royal, and ridden himself of the idolatrous hierarchy who were attached to the preceding dynasty, Jehu felt himself safely seated on his newly-acquired throne; and his zeal, which he before delighted in displaying, forthwith

flagged. His whole concern seemed now to be to confirm his power; and he pursued that course of policy which he supposed best adapted to this end. The high places, where idolatrous sacrifices were offered, were still maintained; and the people were discouraged from going up to Jerusalem, as the law of God required, at the appointed feasts, lest they might become attached to the house of David, which reigned there, and prove disaffected to himself. Known sins of omission and commission were thus countenanced, lest the national differences between Judah and Israel should be merged by growing intercourse, and Jehu's posterity should be dethroned, by the tribes returning to their old allegiance to the house of David.

It would not excite our surprise, therefore, if we had read that Jehu had been punished, in the providence of God, for committing the same crimes which he had avenged upon the house of Ahab; but it has greatly perplexed commentators to explain how it was that Hosea, a succeeding prophet, was inspired to denounce and threaten the house of Jehu, because of the blood which their founder had shed in Jezreel, especially when he was God's appointed executioner in this act, and, more particularly, when God had promised him, as a reward for this very thing, that his posterity should sit upon the throne of Israel to the fourth generation. How can any course of conduct be both right and wrong? How can a just and unchangeable God reward and punish the same act? These points are no less difficult of adjustment than they are important in themselves. They will, in the sequel, be made clear; but there are other instructive lessons

taught by Jehu's case ; an understanding of which is necessary, in order that the questions which have been asked may receive satisfactory replies.

We remark, then, first : That *God, in accomplishing his just and gracious purposes, frequently makes use of wicked men.* That Jehu was ungodly and selfish, the concise history already given, clearly proves : his sole object was to advance his own ends. He may have flattered himself that he was actuated by zeal for God, from the fact that a divine command had been issued for the execution of that which he was doing, and because all the people of God were engaged on the same side with himself ; but he did not obey God, even when he did that which God commanded. He did not please God, even when he did that which God desired to have done ; he served himself, and not God, even when he did that which God required. He was contented to go as far in what God commanded as served his own turn, but there he stopped. So far as would contribute towards his own advancement and settlement upon the throne, so far he went in the way which God had marked out, but no farther.

A quaint writer has compared a heart like this to the hand of a rusty dial. "Suppose," says he, "the hand of a rusty dial stand (as now) at 10 o'clock ; look upon it, and it seems to go right, but it is not from any inward right state of the clock it does so, but by accident ; for stay till after 10, and come again at 11 or 12, and it stands still as before at 10. So let God command anything that may hit with a man's own ends, and be suitable to him, and he seems to be obedient to God ; but let God go on further, and re-

quire something that will not serve his turn, that will not agree with his own ends; and here God may seek for a servant; as for him, he will go no further."

Now, some may not see how it is consistent for the holy God to employ such instrumentality, and to use wicked men to effect his righteous purposes. But the Scriptures frequently represent God as so doing; and the devout mind, instead of experiencing any difficulty in justifying it, adores the wisdom and power of that overruling providence which can make even the wrath of man to praise the Most High; which can use the gifts and talents of even the ungodly, in effecting the deliverance of God's cause, or in conferring a blessing on God's people.

Brethren, the pen of many a writer, which has been wielded with the sole object of advancing the literary reputation of him who held it, has yet been used to remove some stigma which rested on the secret ones of Christ, or to present some subject in a new, but correct light, and thus free from hurtful misconception the advocates of the truth. Many a worldly-minded statesman, too, in the pursuit of office, has yet been instrumental in relieving the people of God from severe oppression; because such a course of policy would make him popular. Many a conqueror, also, seeking only military reputation, or a crown, has done the same thing under the pretext of delivering the Church of Christ from bondage. Now, when the injuries to be remedied are past or distant, we may be disposed to view the use of such instrumentality with a censorious eye; but when they come near our own times,

or affect our own interests, we cannot but admire the justice and propriety of such a course.

When Jehu was raised up to avenge the deaths of the Naboths, and of God's prophets, and to deliver those who still continued to be persecuted and threatened with extremity, we may be lost in a God-dishonouring amazement; but when a Henry the VIII, with equal selfish and diabolical ends, destroys the Papal supremacy, and delivers the cause and souls of Christ's people from this iron despotism, we receive the gracious boon with even a more thankful and adoring heart, because it was conferred through such a channel. Whenever carnal weapons are to be used, and blood must be shed, it would seem to be a most considerate ordering towards his people, on the part of God, to effect their deliverance by ungodly agents. Let us then, brethren, learn to seek for other proofs of our spiritual character and condition, than the bare fact of our being zealously engaged on what is undoubtedly the side of God, or than because the true people of God are our coadjutors, or look upon us as their deliverers: for in effecting his own glorious purposes, God often uses the worst of men.

But we proceed to remark, secondly, that *the perversion of our duties and of the divine precepts to our own ends immeasurably enhances our guilt.* Let us illustrate this. Is a man, then, we ask, culpable for an improper and intoxicating use of spirituous liquors? Are all the disastrous effects which he brings upon himself by such an indulgence only a just infliction? Will he be unable to answer when God calls him to an account for having employed one of his wise gifts

for so beastly a purpose? But of how much sorer punishment shall *he* be thought guilty, who perverts the best blessings which have been vouchsafed fallen men, which indeed are the channels through which some foretaste of heaven may be enjoyed on earth, to his own vile, selfish purposes; who employs the means of grace themselves to promote his own private ends! If a man come up, for instance, to the assembling of the saints, or if he engage in prayer and praise, or if he approach the table of the Lord, or if he ascend the pulpit, and all, or any, with worldly and unscriptural ends—is not such a perversion of heaven's choicest gifts, worse than using strong drinks to intoxication? Is not the turning of "the solemn meeting into iniquity" more criminal than drunkenness? Is not such specious zeal in the service of the Lord, as Jehu's, equivalent to spiritual forgery, which is the worst of all the sins that are included under that name? Does it not tend to foster distrust in the mind of every beholder in the reality of true religion, and in any substantial difference between the righteous and the wicked? Is it not, moreover, an attempt to impose outward conduct, the mere shell of true service, and a pretended motive, upon the Most High God, as though he were not the searcher of hearts?

If, now, a hypocrite like this, should undertake to denounce, and even punish a fellow-man for idolatries and following his own lusts, and not engaging in the worship of the true God—although his judgment may be in itself just, and according to the will of God, although the penalty which he inflicts may be deserved by the victim—yet, in the sight of God, is not

such a judge or executioner himself unjust? should he not be held responsible for the very suffering he inflicts, under the pretended zeal for God's claims, but with the real design of promoting his own aggrandizement? Was not Jehu, then, when he killed Joram, at the command of God, for the sin of idolatry, guilty of murder, since he was himself at the very moment an idolater in heart, and continued to be such in practice to the day of his death. Was not God, therefore, infinitely just, when he exacted of Jehu's idolatrous house, the blood which its founder, moved by a pretended indignation at the sin of idolatry, spilt in Israel, although it was God's command that that blood should be shed? God, brethren, is a God of judgment; neither can he be mocked! Thou who killest a man for worshipping idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?—then thou art not only an idolater, but a murderer. Thou who sayest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?—then thou art not only a thief, but an unjust judge. Oh! brethren, let us beware how we undertake even the service of God, lest that service itself be considered a worse sin than all the sins which we virtually denounced by professing to be Jehovah's servants.

But we remark, thirdly, *God, as the sovereign of the earth, may most justly bestow temporal blessings on wicked men for their outward services.*

Much good was accomplished through wicked Jehu's instrumentality; the idolatrous house of Ahab was exterminated; Baal's priesthood was punished; the prophets and people of God were allowed to worship him without fear. For the accomplishment of this,

Jehu had been designated by God; and he who estimates earthly rewards by the manner in which they are used; who turns even temporal blessings into curses, when they are possessed by his enemies; he who exalts the basest of men to the seat of power for the wickedness of them who dwell in the land; God, we say, might well in accordance with these principles, anoint Jehu as king, and promise, on account of the extent of that outward obedience which Jehu had paid to his commands, to confirm him in the kingdom to the fourth generation. On the very same principle, God, brethren, rewards even natural amiability with the attachment of wives, and children, and servants: and the mere wise industry of unconverted men, he follows with worldly wealth. The proper use of our birth-gifts and talents, are all appropriately recompensed with earthly good; and this God most wisely does, as the Supreme Governor of the present state—his administration of which is a deeply-laid scheme—all mysteriously working out the destinies of his friends and foes in that world, where the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance, and the wicked shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt.

We remark, then, lastly, on this case, that, *although God bestow temporal rewards on the selfish and double-minded for their zeal, yet he will justly hold them responsible, and punish them for that unsanctified zeal hereafter.* Otherwise, indeed, God could not be the pure and just God which he claims to be. If he received the unclean into spiritual communion with himself; if he cleared the guilty, it would be inconsistent with his own unchangeable nature. Of all this, the unbelieving and

unrenewed have been faithfully forewarned; and if they have blinded and persuaded themselves to the contrary, when they have had the assurance of his word, which cannot fail, to that effect; if, because they are in the possession of God's temporal benefits, they conceive that they are in a state of acceptance with him, and are heirs of salvation, then, when they awake up hereafter as outcasts; when they lift up their eyes with the rich man in hell; the sudden and unexpected destruction will have been brought upon themselves. God will still be just, although he bereave them of their abused temporal blessings, and punish them with everlasting destruction from his presence and from the glory of his power. Thus Jehu's idolatrous house was hurled from their seat of earthly power, and at length punished in hell, as murderers, for what was seemingly and outwardly zealous obedience to the commands of God.

And now, brethren, in application of this entire case, which we trust you thus fully understand in all its bearings and principles, at least two reflections should be made. First, *we see the necessity of a single eye to the glory of God, in all that we undertake for him.* Zeal in God's service is indeed a most praiseworthy duty and grace. "It is good," says the great apostle, "always to be zealously affected in a good thing." Such charms, moreover, had mere blind earnestness in even Paul's eyes, that he was filled with desires for the salvation of his countrymen: "*for* I bear them record," said he, "that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." Nor was this inspired man singular in this respect. Among errorists, we

cannot choose but admire those who are devoted and consecrated to the furtherance of their false principles, rather than those who seem to be indifferent, and who merely make some outward profession, in order to retain their places and livings. Hence it is, that partial respect and sympathy have been excited among Christ's enlightened followers for those who have so earnestly of late endeavored to introduce Popery into our pure and Protestant branch of the Church of God. The aspiration is often felt and expressed, "Would that the mists which surround these benighted laborers might be dispelled by the Sun of Righteousness; and that this misspent fervor might be purified and used in the service of the true Christ!" while all are indignant against the mere high and dry, and feel prompted only to drive them as drones from our spiritual hive.

Still, brethren, the Redeemer in whom we profess to believe, hath said: "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." What will prove in the end to be the true Church of Christ is not distinguished from the world as one visible organization is from another. We are not transplanted from one to the other by any outward profession; even though we be as zealous as Jehu himself, and be emboldened to invite the Jehonadabs to "come with us, and see our zeal for the Lord." The true Church differs from the world as light from darkness; and unless our natures be changed, unless we have been born again, we have never entered the kingdom of God; we still serve self, that idol of the natural man, whether he be within or without the pale of the visible

Church; we have only changed the place in which, and the means by which we endeavor to exalt ourselves. Before, it was the world and worldly things which we perverted to our own advancement; now, it is the Church of Christ and the blessed means of grace. Among all who have discernment, if we be self-seekers, even our good is evil spoken of; and although it may be said of us that in this world we have our reward, yet we shall only be exalted to heaven, that when we are thrust down to hell, our fall and destruction shall be worse. "Whether, then, we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do," brethren, let us with the eye of the new-creature, kept constantly single and clear, "do all to the glory of God." But, let us not, like Jehu, flatter ourselves, and call upon others to witness, our "zeal for the Lord," when we are only serving self. Let us remember, moreover, that for judging Joram, Jehu was judged of the Lord, because he reserved for himself somewhat of Joram's sin; and let us be therefore careful not to condemn unsparingly a brother who has a beam in his eye, while we retain even a mote in our own. But while, thus, by the terrors of the Lord, we urge upon you the duty and necessity of singleness in zeal; we would not forget, in conclusion, that even a *David shrank from the service of God, because Uzzah was struck dead for putting forth his hand, with a blind zeal, to steady and uphold the ark.*

It is just such tender and enlightened consciences as the psalmist's, who are most aware of the corruption and deceitfulness of their own hearts; who know best how mixed are even their purest motives; and who

are continually crying out, "Search us and prove us, and see if there be any evil way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting." It is just such, who, when they fear that God will be strict to mark iniquity, stand in dread of either saying or doing anything in God's behalf, lest they should only offend him with whom they have to do, and injure themselves. But such apprehensions arise only from the misconceptions of unbelief. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." The imperfect righteousness of believers in Jesus is accepted and prized by God. Jehu was not condemned and punished because, through creature infirmity, he was unable to accomplish all that God commanded; but because, in what he did and left undone, his sole object was to advance his own interests. If, with a sincere heart, he had offered all that he did to God, and had mourned because he could not effect all that God enjoined, he would, through Jesus, have been accepted in his deed. So, if we have true and earnest desires to fulfil all God's holy will, both in our feelings and our lives; if we grieve over the ill-desert of what we have done, and over all that remains unattempted; if we present Jesus' righteousness as the plea for the acceptance of our offering; if we supplicate for additional strength from the Spirit to subdue all the land that remains to be possessed; we shall not be cast out; but our offering will be a "spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Let it, then, be the single aim of our heart, and the effort of our hands, to make all we "design, or do, or say," to unite in advancing the glory of God; and however much we may come short, yet, if our sole

reliance be on Jesus' righteousness and death, we shall not be rejected, when "we do with our might what our hands find to do." On the contrary; while all who wrap their talents in a napkin and bury it, shall be punished; God shall receive us with approval. "Let us, therefore, stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free;" and without fear or doubting, strive to have in us, both in its character and degree, the same mind which was in Him, of whom it is written: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."

Having, therefore, Gospel promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

## SERMON XVII.

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THANKS TO THE AUTHOR OF MERCIES.

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Hos. ii. 21, 22.

“I WILL HEAR, SAITH THE LORD, I WILL HEAR THE HEAVENS; AND THEY SHALL HEAR THE EARTH; AND THE EARTH SHALL HEAR THE CORN, AND THE WINE, AND THE OIL; AND THEY SHALL HEAR JEZREEL.”

THIS passage most graphically establishes a truth which is theoretically admitted on all sides, but is practically forgotten by many, and with which we propose, by the consideration of the text, to impress ourselves anew, that we may more hopefully enforce on your consciences a few obvious and important duties.

Our attention is first claimed, then, by the exposition of the text. Hosea lived in an age preceding the captivity into which the tribes were sent, on account of their sins. His prophecy consequently contains many threatenings of evil, in order to intimidate the wicked—mingled, however, with promises of good, in order to encourage the faithful. Our text forms one of the most striking intimations of the blessings which God intended to bestow on his people, when they had drunk the dregs of that cup of trembling which he was then mixing in his righteous vengeance. It uses, however, a term to designate the tribes while

enjoying their future freedom and prosperity, which had but recently been invented, in view of their threatened and deserved calamities. It is a term, too, which denotes either a blessing or a curse, Jezreel signifies both *sown* and *scattered*—possibly from the fact, that the sower scatters his seed on every side. The name was originally applied to the Israelites, in the prospect of their being scattered over the face of the earth, as they now are. It could, in this connection only, convey terror to their minds. But as God never sends upon his people an unmixed and eternal curse; as he only “visits their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes, but does not take utterly from them his loving-kindness, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail:” so here he saw fit to indicate his gracious intention by the double meaning of the name by which he called them; though scattered and apparently lost, yet should they ultimately spring up like seed, and become more flourishing and abundant than in all the past. Thus did God most impressively endeavor to furnish his covenant people with hope during their approaching adversity, and to divest them of pride in their subsequent prosperity. It is Israel, then, once scattered and cursed, but now gathered and blessed; it is the covenant people of God, humbled in view of their past sins and sufferings, and in the full enjoyment of all the blessings of their predicted restoration, who are referred to, under the name of Jezreel, in our text.

But what are the benefits here promised to the natural seed of Abraham, and which, in their fulness, it would seem, are yet to be bestowed? Let us begin

at the end of the stream, and, step by step, trace it to its source. Here, then, we find Jezreel, the needy outcasts of Israel, gathered, by the providence and grace of God, once more into his safe fold. In themselves, they are as destitute and wretched, as when they were "scattered and peeled:" they are the very embodiment of wants and dependencies, which on every side cry out for their appropriate supplies and helps.

But the difference consists in this—Then, Jezreel was deserted and made to feel his necessities, now, they are all relieved and prevented; then, his cry was disregarded, now, we are told, that Jezreel is heard. But by whom? or rather, we should ask, By what? By no intelligent, or even living, object; but by senseless and inanimate things; by things, however, capable of, and necessary to, his sustenance. As if endued with the sense of hearing, and possessed of the most self-sacrificing compassion—all that was required to support, and cheer, and comfort the reconciled people of God, "corn, wine and oil," offer themselves as ready for consumption—they hear the cry of Jezreel, and present themselves upon his table, and the late needy outcast is furnished with a bounteous store.

But, in the striking figure of our inspired prophet, these material necessities of life are further represented as deeply solicitous about their own exhaustion—as apprehensive lest, after they are consumed, Jezreel should again suffer want; and they accordingly cry out to the prolific source of their own existence, to the earth from which they sprung, to replenish their

decreasing stock. Nor was the appeal unheard. For not only is the earth described as exerting all its vegetative strength, and profusely bearing fruit, but as being, in its turn, fearful lest all its own resources should be expended; lest the drought should desiccate its productive juices, and blight the land with dearth, and as praying to "the heavens" not to withhold the early and the latter rain. The heavens, too, cordially answer the petition; they spontaneously gather their moisture into clouds, which empty themselves in genial and fructifying showers on the fields. But the heavens, the supreme and commanding link in the chain of creature causes, also distrust the extent of their own means, and sympathizing with all their subordinate agents, in the supply of Jezreel's wants, they look up to him who liveth in their own immensity, and, as the organ of the universe, they supplicate him in whom all fullness dwells, and whom giving impoverisheth not, neither doth withholding render rich, perpetually to renew their energies, and make them unceasingly to discharge their part. Nor to this appeal is he deaf from whom had been derived the desire and power of all the other creatures to perform their office; for, "it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens;" I will furnish them with abundant resources to fructify the earth, that it may impart nutritious qualities to its own fruits, and that they may plentifully support the people whom I have restored, and whom it will henceforth please me to bless.

Thus, brethren, it most beautifully appears, by our text, to be a scriptural doctrine, that, however varied

and numerous may be the links in the chain of second causes by which blessings are conferred, it is yet God who worketh all and in all; it is he who empowers the heavens to fructify the earth, that it may produce its corn and wine and oil for the use of Jezreel. God sitteth in the heavens exalted over all; and when he hath a mind to bless, the creatures gladly lend their aid, all nature acts in concert, and in one harmonious voice, its several parts ask the privilege of furthering with their might the purpose of his grace. This is the cardinal principle, in the government of the world, taught by our text; and it will afford us some practical lessons at the close. But there yet remain one or two points in the words before us, which require some reference ere we can legitimately and profitably reach this end.

It would appear, then, from this explanation of our text, that a day is to come, in which God's ancient people shall renounce their infidelity, be taken again under his Almighty wing, and enjoy his abundant blessing. All the means necessary for their highest improvement and happiness will be there plentifully vouchsafed. Both in soul and body, shall they be the favored recipients of God's heavenly benediction and grace. The whole face of nature will then be changed: the curse now resting on the earth shall be removed; it shall no longer bear thorns and briars, but it shall be restored to its paradisiacal state; it shall be easily kept and dressed, and almost spontaneously bear fruits, compared with which the grapes of Eshcol shall be diminutive. Then shall have arrived the period predicted by St. Paul, when "the creature

shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, under which it now groans, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God." The incarnate Son of God will prove himself to have been an effectual Redeemer, exalting the earth above its original and unfallen state. God will show, in that restitution of all things, to what an extent he can clothe his inanimate creation with productive energy, and how much corn and wine and oil his earth can bear, when he hears the heavens, and commissions them from their enlarged and replenished capacities, without restriction, to put forth their fructifying strength.

Such, then, are the glorious prospects of the natural seed of Abraham, when, as is foretold, they shall become all righteous, and shall turn unto the Lord: a redeemed and renewed creation shall be rendered by the energetic operation of a present God, gladly and unreservedly tributary to their special wants. "It shall come to pass in that day that I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens; and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel."

But are we, brethren, as Gentile believers, excluded from all interest in this promised blessed state?—a state in which the material plenty and happiness, alluded to in the text, however desirable in itself, are yet chiefly valuable as a token of that perfect acceptance which exists between God and those who live in its midst, and of the intimate communion which is carried on between him who conferred, and those who enjoy it. I ask, Are we excluded? This is surely not the ground assumed by inspired Paul. There

may be, indeed, special services and privileges reserved for those who believe, among the natural seed of the father of the faithful. This is more or less clearly indicated. But then, as all who are unbelievers among them shall be shut out, so all who believe among us shall be embraced.

In all essential respects, the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles has been broken down under the Gospel dispensation; and God, by his Son, hath reconciled both in one body unto himself: so that now every one who is of faith, be he Jew or Gentile, the same is a child of faithful Abraham. It is, then, the privilege of every follower of Christ, to look forward with hope, as an heir of the promise in our text, when Zion shall be co-extensive with the earth, and the unclean shall not dwell there; when every mark of the curse shall be removed from a world effectually redeemed; when God's face shall arise and shine, and give peace and abundance to all on whom it rests; and when, as an instance and proof of his completed reconciliation, faith shall no longer be tried by even temporal destitution and distress, but he "will hear the heavens; and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine and the oil; and they shall hear his spiritual Jezreel."

But, we ask again, Has our text, and the principle in God's government which it establishes, no application in the present state? How clearly will it be seen, when our prophecy is fulfilled, that every good and perfect gift descendeth from the Father of lights! With what spontaneous gratitude will every redeemed beneficiary of the Lord, then receive blessings at his

hand. However numerous the second causes through which God will then confer his favors, his presence will be easily recognized in all. No atheist, or infidel, or ingrate shall then live; for all shall walk by sight.

But, Christian brethren, if the abundance which shall then reign will call forth feelings of this kind, should not the present ample provision for our wants and comforts excite the same emotions, and prompt to every suitable expression of them in our lives? Oh! there is something peculiarly impressive in the manner and degree in which God supplies our necessities under the existing dispensation of his grace! As an evidence of his displeasure against sinners, his curse rests upon the very earth on which fallen men reside; but, as a blessed token of the love which he bears to his redeemed, this curse is not permitted to exert its full force, as in the case of that fig-tree against which Jesus' word went forth, and which was withered at its roots. Judgment is now mingled with mercy, for the sake of God's chosen and secret ones; the faithful are thus privileged to see an irresistible attribute of God, on their account, met by another equally strong, and stayed in its exhibition and course. They are authorized, therefore, in an especial manner, to view every blessing received as a proof of God's great present favor, and as a foretaste of that unmingled and overflowing cup of divine love which shall be put into their hand, when faith shall be lost in sight and hope in fruition; yea, every partial blessing, every stinted crop, every flower embosomed among thorns, is a singular instance of God's present delight in us, and a foreshadowing of the day in which he "will hear the

heavens, and the heavens shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine and the oil; and they shall hear his spiritual Jezreel."

We come, now, in conclusion, to derive a few practical lessons from our text. We are here, then, impressively taught the momentous truth, that *God is the great First Cause of every blessing*. It is an unscriptural idea to conceive of God as planning and putting into execution the system of nature, and then leaving it to its own senseless operation. He maintains a constant and minute supervision; so that there is nothing done which is not according to the counsel of his will. However perfect the machinery of nature, it would soon, in all its parts, cease to work, and be brought to confusion, unless God were present, working all in all; giving or withholding virtue from the works of his own hands, and commissioning them to bereave, or bless, the souls with whom he deals. The heavens above us would be brass, and the earth under us would be iron, unless God heard them, and sent rain. For the fruitful showers and plentiful harvests, therefore, which have crowned the present year, we are indebted to God, not only as the original Creator of those second causes which were visibly concerned in their production, but as the present Provider for our wants, through their instrumentality. This is a momentous Bible truth, laying at the foundation of all communion between God and our souls.

But, secondly, *God would have us recognize his hand in the blessings we receive*. Nor will mere theory on this point meet his requirements and expectations. Few there are so heaven-daring as to maintain a *creed*

which banishes God from the management of his own work; still, how many practically are "without God!" how many show that they say in their hearts, "there is no God!" How few ever trace, in their own minds, any blessing they enjoy, through the second causes by which they received it, to the bounteous source from which it originally sprung, and then flowed, through creature channels, into their cup! As the farmer leaves a full supply at their doors, are there many who look beyond the money which they pay for what he brings? Do they ever follow him into his fields, from which they receive their food, and hear the earth crying to the heavens, and the heavens to God, and see an answering God, through them, providing the corn and wine and oil, with which their tables are so plentifully spread?

Nor will a *formal* recognition of God's hand suffice. We may even publicly acknowledge our dependence upon the divine hand before every meal; and yet it may be only lip-service. He, to whose eye all things are open and naked, may wonder that we do not sincerely and deeply adore his bounteous hand. He may express his astonishment at us, as he did in these words, over some of old: "Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain." Nor will an *occasional* exhibition of the feeling of dependence answer the end. God's mercies are new every morning, and repeated every evening; and as we are in their constant reception, so there should be a habitual consciousness of their origin. As there is an unceasing stream of substantial blessings downwards, so there should be at least a constant flow of confession

upwards, acknowledging that it is from God's hand they all proceed.

But we are taught, thirdly, by our text, to have *thankful hearts for the blessings we receive*. It is possible that some may have learnt even the two lessons previously mentioned, and yet be practically ignorant of this. So evident were the presence and agency of God to the Israelites in the wilderness, that they must have denied the evidence of their senses, if they disbelieved their dependence on the divine arm; and yet of what presumptuous ingratitude were they guilty! May it not be, too, that our education, observation, and experience have taught us the supervision of an Almighty and Omniscient Being in the management of the world; and yet, instead of our receiving his providential blessings with grateful hearts, we may meet his fatherly chastisements, or his trials of our faith, through sovereign delays in gratifying our wishes and supplying our wants, by impatience and murmurings? We may receive good at the hands of the Lord, as a thing in course; but if he send evil, we may be ready to denounce it as severe, if not unjust.

Oh! brethren, no suitable, no true gratitude to our heavenly Father is ever felt, unless we have been humbled by a full understanding of our natural relations to him, and have been brought into a gracious and redeemed state. It is only through the Spirit of Christ that we are effectually taught our own ill desert, and are made abidingly to feel, that "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." It is only at the foot of Jesus' cross, that we learn the great and unmerited love of God, and are induced to believe

that "he who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, will also with him freely give us all things." It is only by a conscious entering into that covenant with God, which is "sealed with the blood of his Son," and "ordered in all things and sure," that we attain the right and confidence of viewing "all things" as working together for our good, and are emboldened in everything to "give thanks." But when we are brought into this saving relationship with God, then we are able to meet every dispensation of his hand with the mind which was in Jesus, when he said: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Then, it is blessed, with a heartfelt gratitude, to witness with the eye of faith, God hearing the heavens; and they hearing the earth; and the earth hearing the corn and the wine and the oil; and they hearing us.

But, finally, we are taught, by our text, *to show forth our thankfulness in our lives*. Brethren, shall even inanimate creatures join Jesus in his intercession in our behalf—shall the earth cry to the heavens, and the heavens appeal to God, and shall he hear and answer their prayers for our good, and shall we be deaf, when God himself entreats? And does he not address us in the most urgent, winning tones? saying, "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?" And again, "Son, daughter, give me thy heart." Shall any of us remain numbered with those who are professedly negligent of the greatest manifestation of his love, his unspeakable gift, the deliverance up of his Son? Oh! be persuaded, if we be indifferent for the provision of a Saviour, we are thankless for all

the blessings which were purchased for, and flow to us, through his redeeming work. Begin, then, to show your gratitude, by receiving Christ into your hearts through faith, as he knocks and asks for entrance there. Let the love of Christ ever after constrain you to live no longer unto yourselves, but unto him who died for you and rose again. Consecrate yourselves to the furtherance of his cause, and to the good of his people. As the Lord is not deaf to the creatures which advocate your cause, so do you lend a listening and compassionate ear to the cry of the Lord's poor; and freely give of that which you have freely received. As I point you to the Lord in the impressive and attractive attitude of our text, hearing the heavens as they plead in your behalf, in answer to the cry of the earth, be moved to compliance, as "I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service: and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."



## SERMON XVIII.

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### WORLDLINESS AND ITS RESULTS.

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James iv. 4.

“KNOW YE NOT THAT THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE WORLD IS ENMITY WITH GOD? WHOSOEVER, THEREFORE, WILL BE A FRIEND OF THE WORLD, IS THE ENEMY OF GOD.”

WE often hear of treaties of alliance offensive and defensive, whereby men bind themselves to regard each others' differences and contests with the rest of the world as their own, and, at the risk of their fortunes and lives, to make a common cause. Circumstances, perhaps, require this arrangement occasionally; though the wise and conscientious will avoid such covenants with their fellow-men, as much as in them lies. But in many cases of the kind, it is only *active* co-operation that is looked for; and we may invariably disapprove the policy and justice of the cause in which our allies are engaged. No man, no fallible creature, has the right or the power to enchain our minds, and demand a regard for his person which will sanction, with our inward approbation, all his conduct, and that, too, without questioning whether it be right or wrong. Nay, we go further, and declare that the friendship, which is too common in the world, which espouses a cause through prejudice and from respect to the person

of one who is loved, no humble and truly wise man prizes. Friendship between men should never be blind, but be able to see and own faults. We would, too, have our friend the friend of every human enemy we may have upon earth; we would have him seek the highest good of such a one, and insist upon the most charitable construction of his character and course, and the most charitable conduct towards him, both from us and from every other person. The peacemaker who is worthy of being called such, and who, in this character, is the child of God, whatever may be his connection with, or his inward promptings towards one of two murderous spirits, should be able on the field to fall on the neck of the other, and, with real interest in his welfare for time and eternity, entreat him to desist from his deadly purpose.

It may be very flattering to our self-love to have friends of a different stamp from this; we may be ready to renounce a friendship which can throw itself into the arms of a foe; but all else is fickle as the creature, and cannot for a moment be depended on. Give me the friend who loves every man; who consults justice and mercy before he follows any private feelings he may have towards me. So long as I am worthy of his approbation, so long as I can be happy in myself or others, just so long will I have his countenance and co-operation. Such a one, though he reprove my *course*, will still love *me*. Such a one, if wronged, will yet forgive his erring friend. And if so far forgetful of my duty towards God and man, as to forfeit his intimacy, such a one will still be kind. But, who knows not that the closest friendship, based on sym-

pathy of dispositions, or on any worldly thing, and which leads to respect of persons, is sundered by the slightest shock? Every respecter of my person has one other whom he respects more than me; and any of my many thoughtless words or looks, any unaccountable suspicion in his own breast, may cause me to be invited to give that satisfaction which is known among worldly friends.

These remarks will serve to establish a difference between the friendship of Christians and that of other men; but our present purpose is to infer from them, that between fallible creatures, there should never be an alliance of minds and hearts, offensive and defensive. A man should never be expected to hate the persons and things which his friend hates, or to love those which his friend loves. But far different is the friendship between the creature and his God. It is enough for the godly man to know the feelings of his God towards any person or thing in the wide universe, and forthwith his own feelings and conduct are determined on accordingly. The man's *heart* must agree with its God; his thoughts and opinions be formed by those of his God. The man must make himself mere clay, to be moulded by his God—a mere machine, to be worked by his God; he must have no will but his God's. He must love that which his God loves, and hate that which his God hates, and that only. His enlisting oath under the Son of God's banner is, without qualification or reserve: "Thy friends are my friends; and thine enemies are my enemies." "It is for thee to decide, and for me to be and do." He is pronounced unworthy of Christ, who is not ready, at his bidding,

to hate father, mother, wife, child, houses and lands. Every friend of God, like Abraham, is ready, when commanded, to take a knife and slay his Isaac. And all the blessed, who are welcomed by Jesus on the last day, will be ready to go, at the divine bidding, against the doomed sinners and incorrigibly wicked, though in their number there be earthly relations and friends, and to drive them into outer darkness for ever. It is not inconsistent with the perfect character of the Lord Jesus, who loved each of the lost more than friends and brothers ever did each other, and more than any mother her sucking child, to bid these cursed to depart; and neither will it be cruel and hard-hearted in his people to approve and execute his righteous will.

The disciples of Christ allow no feeling to conflict with their duty and allegiance to their Master. The league between the Captain of Salvation and his true soldiers, is without any stipulation on their part for indulgence to themselves, or safety for creature-friends. Its obligations, too, are indissoluble, to last throughout eternity. Every connection and feeling inconsistent with unreserved obedience, is renounced, and that for ever. Friendship for those whom God regards as his enemies—sympathy for them in any pursuit disapproved by him, is a breach of the original compact; places us in his estimation on a level with his foes, and, unless repented of and forsaken, will ultimately exclude us from the number and portion of his friends. Nor let these exactions of God's proffered friendship be regarded severe. For he is in heaven, and we on earth; he is from everlasting, we of yesterday. He

knows all things, and the little knowledge we possess, and even the minds that acquired, or rather received it, came from him; and to expect so close a friendship as the Gospel offers with such a being on other terms, would be highly derogatory to him, and presumptuous in us.

Let not, then, our being required in the text entirely to abjure friendship with one of the enemies of God, excite our surprise. Let us not demur at the apostolic doctrine thus popularly and forcibly expressed: "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." It would seem, then, that the world is the declared enemy of God. And that, as every advanced Christian, in his own experience knows, and as abundant Scriptures assert, if God's love is unbounded, his hatred is equally so. There is not only no compromise between himself and the world with which he is at war; but he declares that man his foe, who has any sympathy with the views, pursuits, and fortunes of the world.

Since such are the serious consequences of worldliness on our part, it is important to decide in what it consists. There are few, at least among the nominal followers of Christ, so ingenuous as to admit their participation in any feeling or conduct so solemnly proscribed by God—the bare confession of which, too, would at once number them with the enemies of the Lord, and moreover show that they were marching under the banner of one to whom they were opposed. Accordingly, great differences of opinion on this subject pervade even the visible church of Christ.

We propose to notice only one error, and then state what is the true Bible notion of friendship with the world. It is a serious mistake with many zealous persons, to limit their ideas of worldliness too much. This operates injuriously on those who are influenced by what they say, and, it may be, on themselves; since they and their friends are allowed free scope in the boundless margin of a very narrow circle.

What is the idea but too commonly conveyed to many minds by the question, Is he worldly? Is it not, Does he participate in worldly amusements? Does he go to balls? Does he play cards? attend the theatre? visit the race-course? or entertain himself in any way which spiritually-minded persons avoid and advise against? Now, it is a sufficient condemnation of thus limiting the term, that it is nowhere so defined in the inspired word. It is rather in accordance with the general spirit of the Scriptures than with any positive precept, that experienced Christians refuse to engage in these amusements. And such, when they pray against the world, which is one of their three enemies, are very far from any reference to cards and theatres and balls—to resort to which the great body of them have not the slightest temptation. They have clean escaped from these errors, feel themselves in no immediate danger from them, and regard them as dead enemies. The natural consequences of this unscriptural limitation of worldliness are such as these: the advocate and partaker of these amusements hears his professing friend scandalize his neighbor's dress or equipage—express, without any reference to an overruling Providence or a better hope, an unqualified

regret for some temporal loss—or, perhaps, sees him fully engrossed, day by day, in laying up treasure on earth. He hears and sees worldly sentiments and worldly practice on the part of his friend, and, not being convinced of a distinction without a difference, he flies from the lecture of this pretender to religion against the amusements of the world, and drowns his convictions in the whirlpool of their vanities and pomps.

Another deplorable effect of this error is, it conveys a wrong impression of true religion to the minds of the young, in whose eyes these worldly baits are most alluring. If the great difference between a Christian and a sinful life consists, as some give reason to infer, in abstaining from, or indulging in these things, is it astonishing that their worldly minds, their natural hearts—untaught in the existence of a higher and better happiness, and in the possibility of a change in their tastes through the power of the Holy Ghost, so that they will relish what is really better, though they now loathe it;—is it surprising, I say, that the young, whom the *gay* and *giddy* world especially captivates, and who are ignorant of these essential Gospel truths, should regard the discipleship of Jesus a gloomy calling, and shun their only Saviour and friend? Nay, is it not to be expected that their hearts, naturally averse to true godliness, should lead them to raise the question, with a Christian friend urging them to seek the salvation of their souls, whether or not certain amusements be innocent and allowable?

In favor of these, much that is plausible may be said, while, if the issue were the duty of mourning over

sin, receiving by faith the Lord Jesus, and serving God, they would be speechless, and their guilt confessed. Their hearts, if they complied with their friend's counsel, and received the Spirit of God, would be changed; worldliness would be overcome; and the places in which the worldly meet, and where they only can enjoy themselves, would be forthwith and for ever deserted. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ?" "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." "And whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Oh! instead of ministers and Christians grieving only when the worldly around them enjoy themselves in their way, let them constantly weep over worldly hearts which, so long as they remain unchanged, are as ruinous when silent and sad, as when noisy and mirthful. Instead of the ambassadors of Christ or his people being beguiled to what the world thinks its strong ground; instead of their consenting to preach and talk about the amusements of unrenewed men, let them exclusively insist on these great truths: the sinfulness of every human heart; its ill desert; its need of the Saviour Christ. Let them extol the preciousness of the Lord Jesus, hold him up before sinners' eyes, exhort to humble, persevering prayer, that, drawn by the Father, they may come to the Son, and be born again of the Spirit of God. Let the old man be put off, and his tastes will go with him, and his food no longer be sought after or enjoyed. Let the new man be put on, and the soul will relish what it would not, and could not, partake of before. Let Jesus be exalted, and the world will sink. Let

the worldly know, that in their Saviour they will find a blessed substitute for all which they may relinquish; that,

“As by the light of opening day,  
The stars are all concealed,  
So earthly pleasures fade away,  
When Jesus is revealed.”

But, while convinced of the unscripturalness of insisting prominently on the sinfulness of what are denominated worldly amusements, my fellow-professors will not regard me as transcending proper bounds, when I beg them to consider if participation in these pleasures does not betray, in an eminent degree, a state of heart coinciding with what, we shall soon see, the Scriptures pronounce friendship with the world— if I beg them to say, Where can the spirit of the world, to which God is opposed, be found, if not in the places and amusements of which we speak?—if I ask any of them who countenance or frequent these resorts, if they do not give occasion to the world to think that the Lord Jesus has failed them; that they do not find him sufficient, and that they are obliged to resort again to the pleasures of sin, which are for a season? Neither will Christian parents take it amiss if, these things being so, I affectionately inquire, whether that can be thought a necessary accomplishment or part of education for those souls which were given them to train for heaven, that will fit them to engage with pleasure in any amusement which betrays friendship with the world, and, of consequence, according to the text, enmity with God? Let children in riper years learn, on their own responsibility, if they see fit, how

to enjoy themselves with the world, and their conduct may be the affliction, it cannot be the sin of the parent; but if, in the period of their childhood, they are taught the art, whose will be the fault of its after exercise? And now to return.

It will be seen, that, while we are far from countenancing the amusements of the world, and think, that their tendencies are only evil, and that they are condemned by the spirit of the sacred Scriptures, yet we insist it is a miserable limitation of a well nigh universal sin, to confine worldliness to attendance at a few places of worldly resort, or compliance with a few worldly customs. The question recurs then, what is the world? St. Paul speaks of "the course of this world," that is of the track which it pursues,—the life which its views, maxims and example dictate and justify. He describes this "course" to be in accordance with "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." He further declares, that "by nature," all Christians, "in the times before they were quickened by God and made heirs of salvation, were numbered among worldlings, and that their conversation and state were like the world's." He also says, they are made to differ from the world, in their course here, and in their condition and prospects both for the present and the future life, by the grace of God, through "*faith*." So that in this passage to the Ephesians, "the world" means, all men in their natural, unrenewed state, who walk by sight and not by faith. "The world" is plainly used in the same sense in our text, and in numerous parallel passages.

Now "the course" of these men is further defined by St. Paul to be following the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind,—that is, pursuing such a life as creatures with our appetites and passions would, if they looked only at the things which are seen and temporal,—if they had no respect to God, and to the things which faith hopes for, and of which it is the evidence. This then is the world. It is the men whose "course" is such. These men are called the world, because all men born into the world are naturally such; and because they constitute the vast majority of those who live upon the earth. What, then, are we not to be the friends of such? Yea, verily, in one important sense. Did not Jesus suffer and die in their behalf? And so we are not to love our lives unto the death for them. For their souls, and highest good we are to spend and be spent; and that too, though the more abundantly we love, the less we be loved.

The children of this world are to experience in Christians, their best, their only self-denying human friends. But with their "course," the disciples of Jesus are to have no sympathy. Towards them even, so far as they require or expect countenance and cooperation, either by conversation or example, in making provision in the world to fulfil the lusts of the flesh, we are to have no friendship. We are not to be friends to whom they can unbosom their unhallowed schemes with the slightest prospect of sympathy or furtherance. They are in these things to meet in us opposers. We are to warn them, that the wages of

this "course" is death: that he who saveth his life shall loose it, and that it would not profit to gain the whole world, and lose their souls.

The planter, unduly solicitous about the drought or rain; the merchant, engrossed with calculating and hoarding his gains; the mechanic, busied with earthly houses, neglecting the heavenly one; the aspirant for temporal honors, offices, and emoluments; they who would attract admirers of their persons or their minds; all who seek to please men; all, of every name and calling, who make anything under heaven or God their end, who rest short of Jesus, these should meet, at least in our example, silent rebuke. We should be able to reprove their worldliness, without apprehension of any fair retort: without any allowable use of the world on our part which may be construed into its abuse; without fear of wife, child, house, land, or anything on earth being instanced as an object we do not hate, are not willing to part with for Jesus' sake, and when he wills. This is the spirit which believers seek, when they pray against "the world." To attain this, are they sober and watchful; avoiding all amusements, company and books, nay, imaginings and thoughts which have a tendency to foster "the corruption that is in the world, through lust," and to tempt them renewedly to forsake the divine nature, of which they have been made partakers, and which they have found a fountain of living waters, and to hew out to themselves again those broken cisterns, from which they had escaped.

And now we are ready to understand St. John's

declaration: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The beloved disciple means, if we have a fellow feeling with natural unconverted men, who are scripturally called "the world," in their unfounded and sinful estimation of things under heaven,—if we desire and pursue anything that can be attained in this life, as our rest and end, it is utterly inconsistent with our having those affections towards God which are his due and our duty; it is as impossible as two opposites, that we can in this way love the world, and yet have that supreme and exclusive love of our Father in heaven as our portion and reward, which the Bible alone recognizes as "the love of God." And we should not wonder at the uncompromising hostility, which God declares in our text, against the world and all its friends, against it and all who sympathize or act with it. We are also prepared to comprehend what St. Paul affirms of himself: "the world was crucified to him, and he to the world."

They ("the world,") took no more pleasure in him, than they would in the dead, loathsome carcass of a crucified malefactor. He suited not their feelings, purposes, and views. But he, too, regarded them in the same light. They were crucified to him. He sympathized not with their forgetfulness of things that were unseen, with their seeking rest and happiness short of God in Christ, with their laying up treasure on earth.

And oh! Christian brother, be such a one as Paul. Attain by the same means "the cross of Christ," the same unearthliness and heavenly-mindedness. See

what contempt the Lord of Glory threw on the things of this world by his cross. Boast not, glory not in his cross as your salvation, if at the same time you refuse to learn the lesson of his example. Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. Let him not say to you as to the Jews, "ye are from beneath, I am from above; ye are of this world, I am not of this world." Oh! that was a solemn declaration of the Son of God, on the eve of his crucifixion, and when "he, who had the power of death, that is the devil," was about to approach and claim Him as his own: "The prince of *this world* cometh, and hath nothing in Me." Ah! Christian brother, hath he nothing in *you*, as "*prince of this world*," should he now come? If he find anything of himself in you; if any allowed principle and course of the world be yours,—his claim as "God of this world" in and over your soul forever, will be undisputed in the hour of death and on the judgment-day. Look not then elsewhere. For you have been forewarned: "Know ye not," says the Holy Ghost, "that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." And if the friend of the world: "under the devil," and with "his deceived" are you numbered and serving; and into the lake of fire, which is the second death, it is declared you shall be cast.

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And in the meanwhile, ye, who are vainly endeavoring to lay up treasure in heaven and on earth, to serve God and Mammon,—let not all your fruitless efforts to succeed, either in temporals or spirituals, to

attain inward peace or earthly blessings, excite surprise; for saith not the Holy Ghost: "Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?"



## SERMON XIX.

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### PARTIAL CHANGES INEFFECTUAL.

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Jer. iv. 3.

“BREAK UP YOUR FALLOW-GROUND, AND SOW NOT AMONG THORNS.”

THE generation in which our prophet lived and which he served, were far from being hardened and abandoned. His faithful and repeated warnings and exhortations produced an impression. Nor did his severe denunciations simply drive his sinful contemporaries to fear and despair, or excite them sometimes to anger and acts of vengeance; but it led them to occasional attempts to comply with his requirements, and thus to escape the calamities which he threatened.

Under such promising impulses, some notorious sin would be very generally forsaken, and the hope then seem to be authorized that by timely repentance the impending national evils might yet be averted. But their goodness invariably proved to be “as a morning cloud, and as the early dew which goeth away.” In all such cases, their reformation was temporary, and “it happened with them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.” Either they repented of their repentance, and indulged

again in the sins which they had openly renounced, or they still persisted in something else which equally betrayed earth-bound and rebellious hearts.

Let a single instance of the kind suffice. That legislative provision, which required every Hebrew to liberate such of his own fellow-countrymen as he held in bondage, after they had served him for a specified time, had fallen into general neglect, and their term of service was prolonged. When this violated law was brought to their notice, it was forthwith universally obeyed: the king, the princes and all the people, let every one his man servant and every one his maid servant go free. "But," we read, "afterward they turned, and caused the servants and the handmaids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for handmaids." Need we say that every such sinful relapse deepened the spiritual gloom in which the land was shrouded, and rendered its final overthrow more certain and overwhelming? It betrayed a settled purpose of disobedience on the part of the people; it was equivalent to closing their eyes, in the midst of the light that was shining around, and to walking in the darkness which their self-imposed blindness had inflicted. How provoking, therefore, in the sight of God, must every such partial and fleeting change of theirs have proved! With what emotions of alarm and pity must it have filled the heart of every enlightened friend of such a misguided people!

It was under the influence of these feelings, and while deeply convinced of the utter unprofitableness and increased guilt of all such reformations, that our

prophet, in the most striking way, counsels them to lay aside these worse than vain efforts, and to be content with nothing short of a thorough and permanent change in their characters and lives, saying, in the words of our text: "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns." Of what avail every superficial attempt? It is as foolish and senseless as any expectation of a harvest in a farmer who should scatter his seed on ground which had not been broken up with the plough, and which was covered with thorns. The few grains of seed, which, in such a case, might gain a lodgment in the soil, would yet be infallibly choked by the weeds, and no fruit would be borne.

Just as surely, would Jeremiah have his sinful countrymen understand, that their efforts at reformation would fail, unless they were based upon a radical and lasting change of heart. "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord," continues the prophet, "and take away the foreskins of your *heart*, ye men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my fury come forth like a fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings." No simple resolution on your part, no alteration in outward deportment will satisfy God's requirements, or change the relations in which you stand to him. Unless your very nature itself be changed, your reformations will endure only for a while, and even while they last, will only be evil in God's sight, and provoke his anger to burst forth: wherefore, "Break up your fallow-ground, and sow not among thorns."

Thus, our text, in this connection, teaches two im-

portant lessons: The first is, that *there is a tendency in human nature to make superficial and insufficient attempts to comply with the requirements of God, and in the spiritual world to "sow among thorns;"* and secondly, that *nothing will avail short of entirely breaking up the fallow-ground, or in other words, nothing short of a thorough change of heart.*

Let us look, first, for a moment, at *the disposition among many unconverted men to attempt reformation in an unregenerate state.* It must be acknowledged on all sides, that an unenlightened natural man, knows nothing of that change of heart upon which the Scriptures insist, and without which he cannot do anything acceptable in God's sight, or see his face in peace. Moreover, without being duly aware of the depth and nature of his estrangement from God, he knows that there are many things which he is in the habit of either omitting or doing, although they are forbidden or enjoined in God's word; and he may occasionally hear his course of life in these respects denounced from the pulpit, while his own conscience bears witness to his guilt. It is but natural that he should feel uneasy under these charges, and that he should flatter himself that if he should leave off the particular sins that have been brought under his notice, his relationship towards God would forthwith be altered, and he would henceforth be safe.

Such changes, too, it is evident, may be almost infinitely diversified in their character and extent, and yet all stop short of that which is Scriptural and saving. They may be more or less confined—being limited, in some cases, perhaps, to a single point, and

in others embracing almost every particular in which the children of the kingdom are outwardly distinguished from the children of the wicked one. They may also be more or less evangelical—in some instances having little or no reference to the Gospel, and depending, for their worth and effect, entirely upon their own moral character; while, in others, they may be avowedly connected by their subjects with the blood of Christ, as their sole ground of merit and acceptableness. Every man, too, who has experienced such a change as this, would be a very different character from what he had been hitherto. Every one would observe the difference in those outward sins which he had left off, and in those outward duties which he had begun to discharge. His feelings, likewise, would have been materially modified both towards God and towards the children of God. He would flatter himself that he had now an interest in both; and it is only reasonable that he should be almost filial in his affections towards God, and almost brotherly towards the members of the household of faith.

With a cursory, but honest eye, examine such a character, and you will see how naturally this fearful self-deception results from a single false step at the outset. Suppose a man, now, to be convicted, in some way or other, of one or more particular transgressions of the law of God—it may be intemperance, or licentiousness, or covetousness, or a neglect of the ordinances of religion, and to resolve, under the goadings of conscience or the fear of retribution, to cease, in one or all of these respects, from evil, and to begin to do well. Henceforth he abstains from the intoxicating

bowl; he keeps his body in chastity; he gives freely; he reads the Bible, goes through a form of private and domestic prayer, and attends regularly at public worship. All this, it must be remembered, with no feeling and acknowledgment of the utter insufficiency of such a reformation, and as merely preliminary to his immediate, close, and constant search for pardon and spiritual renewal in the appointed Gospel way, but as an actual beginning to walk in the straight and narrow way, and with the conviction that if he have grace to persevere in this course, he will, at its close, enter into life. Such a man, we say, will very naturally regard his relationship towards God as having undergone a material and blessed change, and his views of, and feelings towards God, will be very different from those which he formerly entertained. The probability is, that he will soon feel it incumbent on him to number himself among the professed people of God, and, through baptism, confirmation, and the Lord's supper, he will ere long be admitted into the visible fold of Christ. He will forthwith learn to ascribe the marked change in his feelings and course, to the grace which he hopes he has received; a kind of sorrow for his previous neglect of God, may be sincerely felt, and a species of faith in the Head of the Church be excited in his breast.

But what, in the meanwhile, is his real spiritual state? There has been, according to our supposition, no real change wrought in his heart. Even the sins which he has left off are not hateful in his sight, on account of what they are in themselves, and of their being counter to the rights and claims of God. If he

could do so with impunity, he would still like to indulge in them to the same excess as heretofore, and, indeed, perhaps they are yet allowed to a most criminal degree. But while the outward life is subjected to some checks, the heart is permitted to go after its former idols without restraint; and other sins, less glaring, but equally under the ban of God's law, are freely committed. No actual communion, moreover, can ever take place between such a character and God. The ways of this counterfeit wisdom are not ways of pleasantness, nor all her paths peace.

Such service of God is far from being perfect freedom. All that such a man undertakes is an irksome task. Not only are the sins which he has given up, so much purchase-money with which he endeavors to procure God's pardon, but his very religion is a tissue of dead works, of which he will have to repent ere he becomes a living member of Christ, and begins to worship God in spirit and in truth. What profit or pleasure can such a one derive from the assemblings of Christians on earth? What meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, can a spiritual eye discern in such a character? Is it not evident that he has sown among thorns? that he forms part of that earth which, bearing thorns and briars, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing: whose end is, to be burned? What he needs is, that his fallow-ground should be thoroughly broken up. When he presents himself hereafter at the door of the kingdom of heaven, he will find it closed against him by the terms of admission which are inscribed upon it: "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter here."

This brings us to the second lesson taught by our prophet in the text, under the figurative, but striking direction, to "break up our fallow-ground;" which is, that *a man's heart must be truly changed, ere God will save his soul, or accept his worship.* His affections, which by nature are entwined about the things of earth, must be loosed, and set upon the things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. No one is admitted to fellowship with the Father of heaven, whose natural tastes are not changed, and who does not come into his presence loathing all things else, and hungering and thirsting for communion with him, as the hart panteth after the water-brooks. Need we say what a radical work must have been wrought, ere such desires for God can be entertained by a fallen soul? It is something entirely above and beyond the power of nature to effect; "for the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." When the fallow-ground of the material earth breaks up of its own accord, and prepares itself for the sower's seed, then will a carnal heart fit itself for the right reception of God's truth and promises, and, under their influence, bring forth fruit unto perfection.

The question, therefore, which most concerns us, is not, How a heart that is changed differs from one in a natural state?—for that is easily understood, and has been already summarily answered, when we stated that its affections were placed, not upon earthly, but upon spiritual and divine things. But the inquiry which specially claims our attention is, How can the fallow-ground of the human heart be broken up?

Where, and in what way, can its earthly roots be torn up, and its soil prepared for Gospel seed? To this we answer, Only by the Gospel plough, when handled by the Holy Ghost; only upon Mount Calvary, by that sight of the cross which the Spirit of God gives. It is by the foolishness of preaching that God saves those who believe; and it is to a brief account of the mode in which this simple instrumentality effects this great and eternal change, that you are now asked to attend. There hovers then, we maintain, about the cross of Jesus, an unseen sovereign power, capable of effectually breaking up the fallow-ground of the human heart, and of sowing it with seed which will bring forth fruit unto everlasting life.

Bring, now, a man who has heretofore been sowing only among thorns; who has been making those attempts at reformation to which he was competent in his natural state—bring such a one to the foot of Jesus' cross, duly convinced of the utter vanity of all his past efforts, and, indeed, of all that he can do; and engrossed with the desire of having the fallow-ground of his heart thoroughly broken up. Such a man will know as much of the evil of sin as his previous apprehensions of God's wrath were able to teach, and of the power of sin, as he might learn from his past futile efforts at deliverance; but he has never conceived how great was the price which the forgiveness of sin would require, nor yet how deeply-seated sin was in the fallen soul, and what an Almighty agency it would need to uproot it. Now, however, he perceives that nothing short of the blood of an incarnate God can remove its guilt. He deplores that pride and hardness

of heart, which even such manifestations of love on the part of God, and such a disclosure of his own ill-desert, as is made in the death of his divine sacrifice, can neither humble nor move. He prays for that which is now consciously beyond his own strength—the power to trust in Christ, and to love God. Nor is this power conferred, in answer to his prayer, until he adjudges himself as deserving to be cast into that lake of fire which is the second death; until he is impressively taught what a weighty thing God's curse, as it rests upon fallen human nature, is, and how helpless he is while groaning under its burden, and contending with his own native corruption;—until he is brought actually to renounce every other plea for pardon, except that which the merits of Christ's sacrifice afford, and to cast his sin and his soul entirely upon his crucified Saviour for salvation;—and until he ascribes the power thus to believe to the effectual working of God's Spirit in his inner man. Then it is that he is filled with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Ghost. Then it is that the love of Christ, which prompted him thus to bleed and die in his behalf, constrains his soul. A new principle has gotten effectual possession of his heart. The fallow-ground is broken up. The change which has been wrought is not partial, but thorough. Nor is it temporary; it endures. An everlasting covenant is formed between God and every fallen soul which is thus united to Christ. This is its tenor: "My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words that I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." It was the Holy

Ghost who began this good work, and he will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. The things of Jesus, which proved so effectual in the first sight of them which was vouchsafed to the believing soul, the Comforter will continue to show to every such covenanted son of God whom he has undertaken to lead home to glory. Nor shall they ever lose their attractive influence. As the needle flies to the magnet, so does every such new-born soul follow Jesus, as the Spirit of God presents him to its view. The fallow-ground which was broken up by the Gospel plough, as guided by this unfailing hand, was effectually changed in its very nature, under this heavenly operation. It was converted from that which was thorny into that which is good, and which it is infallibly promised shall, under the fructifying showers and sunshine of God's grace, bear fruit unto everlasting life, either thirty, or sixty, or an hundred fold.

Our subject, as thus presented, supplies us with *a test of the actual spiritual state of every professed follower of Christ.*

Every one should be able to tell whether his religious course began in the way which has been described in this discourse; whether the fallow-ground of his natural heart was originally broken up in this effectual manner; whether he was, at the outset, spiritually led to form this heartfelt and humbling judgment of his own character and ill-desert, and to take this transforming view of his dying Redeemer. Was your soul, then, fellow-professor, ever so brought, for the first time, to the foot of Jesus' cross? Were you enabled to offer, by faith, this slain Lamb of God as

your sacrifice for sin? Was your peace with God based upon this act of your soul? Are all your spiritual hopes dated from that day of your new, your second birth? If the life of God in your soul commenced after you arrived at the years of discretion, this substantially was the mode in which you were originally quickened from your natural death in trespasses and sins. The seed was sown among the natural growth of thorns in the field of your heart, unless it then fell on ground thus broken up by the Spirit of God through the Gospel plough. You started in a wrong road, unless you took your first step in this Gospel path. Every succeeding step has consequently been in a wrong direction; and however specious may have been all your subsequent life, you have yet made no progress towards heaven. Unless, then, at that time, such was the origin of your spiritual life and the source of your present hopes, the seed was not planted in good ground, and you should not rest until your fallow-ground be effectually broken up. For all that you have thus far borne has been only the natural growth of thorns and briars, and you are like unto ground that is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.

But perhaps you will say, "My spiritual life began in infancy; it originated at the baptismal font." Now, far be it from us to limit the power and mercy of God, and to suppose that he cannot, nay, sometimes does not, renew the unconscious infant soul, and fit it to serve him on earth, and to dwell with him in heaven. Nor would we divest you of a hope which may be well founded; but we would remind you that few, indeed,

seem to have a scriptural hope of peace with God, who date so far back the origin of their hope. And if you are authorized in your hope, it can easily be tested. For the spiritual life of those who are renewed in baptism, although it may be somewhat different in its origin from that of those who are regenerated afterwards, is yet, in its continuance, precisely similar. All the spiritually living depend for the habitual acceptance of themselves and their offerings upon the same blood of Christ, upon the repetition of that same view of their own necessity, of that same act of faith in Jesus, by which the three thousand adult converts, on the first Christian Pentecost, were reconciled to God, and had their sins forgiven. All true Christians, however and whenever they were originally regenerated, are at least alike renewed, day by day.

Have we, then, in this sermon, described your daily experience? Is the fallow-ground of your natural heart thus, again and again, habitually broken up? Is your professed daily access to the Father thus through the Lord and by the Spirit? Does the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, thus purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? If so, then rejoice in that spiritual life which was conveyed to you in infancy at baptism, or in any other time or way. But if not, then know that the Spirit of God unites every conscious soul to whom he has imparted life, to Christ; and that as Jeremiah, in the words succeeding our text, exhorted those Jews who trusted in the circumcision which they received when they were eight days old, to circumcise the foreskin of their hearts, so it

becomes me to urge you, who refer to your infant baptism, to be baptized in your hearts by the Spirit of God; to wash by faith in that blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin; to break up your fallow-ground, and sow not among thorns. Oh! what a harvest of disappointment and woe will the natural thorny ground bear in the hour of death, upon the judgment day, and throughout eternity!

Brethren, brethren, break up your fallow-ground; test the fact of its having been broken, by your coming to the Father always by Jesus Christ and him crucified, and by your refusing, in your inmost soul, to glory save in the cross of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

## SERMON XX.

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### DOUBLE-HEARTEDNESS.

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Matt. vi. 24.

“NO MAN CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS.”

THIS seems to have been a proverb, and, in its literal acceptance, carries conviction on its face. If any of us should engage to obey two persons, we should soon find ourselves under the necessity of violating our obligations to the one or the other. Their commands would mutually interfere with each other: they would frequently be issued at the same time, requiring prompt obedience; and to defer compliance with either, in such a case, would be utterly to disregard the source from which it proceeded. The master who was thus neglected must, from pure self-respect, invent some effectual test of his authority. We should be forced to declare our preference and allegiance: we should be made to appear to love the one, and to hate the other, or else to hold to the one and to despise the other. We might previously have persuaded ourselves that it would be difficult, if not impossible, for us to choose between the two: we might have amiably professed an equal attachment to each, and a like readiness to serve either; but the force of these circumstances would

compel us to take our ground; we would be obliged to own to ourselves, and to show to others, whom we acknowledge as supreme, and we would ever after admit that no one can serve two masters.

Such, then, is the well-founded proverb, adopted and used by our Lord in the text. He here applies it to the case of one of his disciples, who should be endeavoring, at the same time, to lay up both earthly and heavenly treasures. He pronounces this to be so impossible as to be equivalent to the attempt to serve two masters. "Ye cannot," he insists, "serve God and Mammon." That it is, moreover, emphatically impracticable for God to admit a rival to his authority, is obvious. God denominates himself "jealous." He is, too, omniscient; acquainted with all our acts, however minute, and with every feeling, and wish, and thought of our hearts. His providences would be so ordered as to test the state of our affections, and require us to show whom we really preferred, whom we supremely served. The only difficulty, therefore, which we can experience in admitting the force of our Saviour's application of the proverb in the text, must arise from our not seeing the propriety of regarding earthly treasure in the light of a master. So foreign, indeed, is this representation to the usual conceptions of the case, that it obviously requires some explanation in order to show its justice.

Let this, then, be our first inquiry: How and when can property be justly viewed as the master of him who owns it? The heaper-up of earthly riches fondly conceives of his treasure rather in the light of his slave than of his master. He looks upon it as a crea-

ture of his own, amassed for his own purposes, and to be used at his private discretion. In certain aspects of the case, too, this estimate of his wealth is no doubt correct. He can change its nature, investing it differently; or he may expend a portion or the whole of it upon his pleasures, or in accomplishing any other object of his heart. But, although we admit that his property is in this sense under his absolute control, yet if he regard his money as necessary to his security or happiness; if his dependence upon it be such that its loss would overwhelm him with want and distress; if his affections and thoughts are chiefly employed in making additions to his stores, or in insuring their safety, can his condition be viewed in any other way than that of the most abject servitude to his riches? For what more could one of the old feudal lords have expected, or received, of his most loyal vassal, than that his follower should, in a similar manner, rejoice in his prosperity, be grieved at his adversity, and regard his life as absolutely essential to his own welfare?

Say not the two cases are different; because the slave loves the person of his master, but the heaper-up of riches regards them simply as means for a certain end; that he seeks them, for instance, either to increase his own importance and influence in society, or to provide for the infirmities of age, or, in case of death, to support his widowed wife and fatherless children. Some philosophers would tell you that the attachment of the vassal to his chief would, if analyzed, develope some ultimate selfish interest, and that the cases were not, therefore, so essentially different as

they might appear to be at first sight. But, without insisting on this speculation, we may at least well doubt whether, in a great majority of instances, riches are not loved for their own sake, and as being in themselves an end, under whatever pretext they be sought. Has not many a prosperous man borne testimony to what have been called, and are well known, as "the pleasures of accumulation?" and, after every reasonable want and anticipation of the capitalist himself, or of his descendants, have been provided for, yet if further accumulation be stayed or lessened, have not happiness, and even health, and life itself often been sacrificed? Who, in the course of his own observation, has not met with cases similar to that which the wise man noted as among the instances of "vanity and sore travail under the sun?" "There is," saith he, "one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labor; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labor, and bereave my soul of good?" Nor is the miserly bachelor alone in this senseless worship of riches for what they are in themselves; but many a husband and father is really guilty of the same idolatry, although it be convenient for him to shield himself from the ignominious charge, by pleading the case of his wife and children.

But it matters not whether earthly treasure be prized for its own sake, or for some end for which it is needed. If it be considered as necessary for any object under heaven, to secure which we have devoted ourselves, soul and body, then, whether we call it a means or an end, it is in either case that without

which we have failed in the dearest purpose of our heart; that, without which we have lost our best friend, the hand to which we looked for the supply of our chief wants, the master upon whom we depended. No loyal subject, ready in his allegiance to offer up his life, consults with more solicitude the bulletins of the sick king's health, than many a jobber, in a fluctuating state of the market, reads the reported sales of his favorite fancy, or many a merchant inquires the price of his stock in trade.

Now, when riches beget such a state of mind in their seeker or possessor, need we point out which is the master, or who is the slave? Let one, then, thus affected towards the wealth which he either owns or covets, professedly undertake the service of God, and the utter incompatibility of the state of his heart with his assumed obligations will soon appear. He wears the livery of one who asserts the right of disposing of him and his, in the same way and to the same degree in which the potter uses his clay; who has published the edict, that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all;" and the first law of whose kingdom is, "Son, daughter, give me thy heart." There must be no reserves; it is "all thy heart" which I require. Such are the statutes of the King to whose eye all the thoughts and purposes of the hearts of his subjects are open.

Need we say, that however consistent an exterior a professor of religion may maintain, yet if he have, in the way described, "made gold his hope, or said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; if he have thus

rejoiced because his wealth was great, and because his hand had gotten much," he is already, without the application of any outward test, a transgressor in the sight of Him who sits upon the throne. He may, indeed, be left to deceive himself and fellow-creatures, and not awake to a sense of his real spiritual condition, until he stand before the final bar, and is about to be punished for his iniquity by the Judge. But, generally speaking, it is his own fault if he do not ascertain the relations in which he stands to God; for Providence furnishes the means by which he can see his character in its true light, and others know how to appreciate him, even if he do not understand himself.

He may receive from the Head of the Church a plain call, like that addressed to the young man in the Gospel, to sell all that he has, and to engage in some obscure work of love, or to go far hence to the Gentiles; and yet his great possessions may induce him to turn a deaf ear to the divine injunction, or persuade him that it proceeded from some other source than Christ. The ever-varying necessities of the cause of his professed heavenly master, may be constantly making their appeals to him for help, and yet, under one pretext or another, he steels his heart against every such approach, and he never cheerfully and bountifully looses the strings of his purse to such an application, but goes on to hoard his gains. While genuine disciples of the Lord whom he avowedly serves, are engaged in their closets, or in the stated week-day communion of the saints, he resorts not to these Bethels, but is engaged in summing up his profits, or in considering the prospects of some new investment. It may be well, if

even in the house of God, on the Lord's day, instead of being in the Spirit, his heart and mind have not gone after their idols. "Where your treasure is, there," our Saviour hath well said, "will your heart be also;" and therefore, when a professed disciple is devoted to laying up treasure on earth, whose fault is it if he does not know that he "cannot serve two masters?"

Have we not now said enough to justify our Lord in applying the proverb in the text to the case of every one of his outward followers, who seeks for worldly riches with such engrossment as to prove that he looks upon them in the light of a treasure, necessary to preserve him from wants and ills which he is not willing to suffer, or to provide him with those comforts and luxuries which he chooses to regard as indispensable?

But, in making this appear, we have likewise shown the impracticability of rendering the real service of God consistent with regarding any worldly object, or pursuit, or pleasure, as essential to our welfare—we have seen that every creature, or enjoyment which rivals God in our hearts, which lays a claim to that time and affection belonging exclusively to him, is another master—whom, if we do not totally renounce, we shall be justly considered as serving—upon the maxim, that we cannot serve two masters. Our text, therefore, is just as applicable to every idolatrous, as it is to the covetous professor—to every instance in which any creature object is allowed to vie with God in our affections; as to the case in which riches usurp his throne in our hearts; and thus we reach the gene-

ral conclusion which St. Paul states in inspired words: "his servants ye are to whom ye obey." Are there not, moreover, many in the visible Church of Christ as deeply absorbed in the pursuit of other earthly objects, as some are in seeking the mammon of unrighteousness? Should not their position also be defined? Should not the vanity of attempting to reconcile the service of God with the engrossment of our hearts in securing any of its worldly purposes be faithfully laid bare?

Let us, then, as specimens of the whole, point out one or two other instances of the kind. Must not a man be blind, who sees not that *the honors and offices, both of the Church and State, have as eager, if not as numerous votaries, among the professed followers of Christ, as wealth itself can boast?* Do they not, moreover, exert an equally pernicious spiritual influence? They leave as little real time and affection to their worshipper to devote to the service of God, as ever the miser himself enjoys. With their pursuit, their follower permits not the closet and the public sanctuary to interfere. They absorb, perhaps, his heart and attention, even while his body is in the place and attitude of worship. With what solicitude does he seek great things for himself! With what care does he mould every act and word of his life, which can have a bearing on his success! Under his unhallowed aspirations, he may become a flatterer with his lips—a mere seeker of popularity, striving to please men rather than God. If he be a minister of the sanctuary, he may even, for the time being, modify the message with which he has been entrusted by the Author of

Salvation to perishing souls. While he is thus, too, sadly proving in the sight of all, that he is the servant of sin,—while he is a notorious instance of the impossibility of serving two masters, he may be utterly unconscious of his guilt, and of the real character of the course he is pursuing. As the covetous man excuses himself under the plea, that he who provideth not for his own hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel; so the ambitious man justifies his conduct. He not only regards the use of worldly means, in order to secure his end, consistent with his allegiance to God; but may persuade himself, that he is verily, in this, doing God service,—that he is only seeking that station for which his talents qualify him better than his competitors, and in which he can exert a wide-spread influence for the good of the Church, and the glory of its head. But, instead of fulfilling the intentions with which he set out, his success is used only as the lowest round of the ladder which he has begun to climb; and as he ascends, his eye—far from looking upward to Him who sits on the glorious high throne, and at whose feet he is bound to cast both his person and his honors, with a song of praise—is cast downward on the admiring and applauding crowds below. Or, perhaps, his most strenuous efforts result only in failure; and—instead of cheerfully submitting to the will of God, and faithfully serving him in that more obscure sphere which Providence has assigned—his heart may be filled with bitterness and suspicion towards his fellow-men, and, if he decline not every duty, he may occupy his post with a spirit unhappy and morose. Thus, what began with such

encouraging spiritual promises, ends with setting at defiance the entire will of God; the man who had not faith to believe that his Heavenly Master had the power to place him in any position where he desired his instrumentality, either without his using any means, or at least only those which were obviously godly, and who therefore would not wait—that man proves that he recklessly hurried on, not to serve and glorify his God, but to exalt himself.

Oh! brethren, “ye cannot serve two masters.” God requires all the heart; or he will take none. He must be our Potter, and we his clay. Nothing will suffice us short of the spirit, which Newton ascribed to the angel, whom he brought, in imagination, on an errand from heaven to the earth; and who, at the bidding of God, was as willing to sweep the streets, as to sit upon the British throne. Nothing short of that “mind which was in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” The exclusive motto of our hearts must be: “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory.” “Ye cannot serve two masters.”

But, briefly, once more, *Are there not many attempts in the visible Church of Christ to reconcile Christian profession with conformity to the gay and fashionable world?* Under how many plausible pretexts is this practised!

“Must I not assimilate,” says one, “in some degree, with the customs of society! Then, must I needs go out of the world, or at least, make myself singular in it! Surely there is some middle path in which I may safely walk—I need not be of the world, while in it. There are undoubtedly many foolish and reprehensible things to be noticed in the circles of amusements, which I sometimes attend; but then, for that matter, it will not do to scrutinize those who go to Church, too closely. I wish to pursue the golden mean; it is not good to be righteous overmuch. Besides, I shall not only deprive myself of much innocent pleasure by such exclusiveness, but I shall soon be marked and shunned, and lose all power and opportunity for usefulness.”

Again, that professedly Christian mother will tell you: “I have no love for places of the kind. It is not for myself that I go there, but simply to use them as a safety-valve for the dissipated spirit of my son, who, I fear, would seek worse resorts, if he were not allowed some harmless pleasures of the kind.” Or, “it is for my daughter’s sake, that I frequent balls. She must enter the world in which she is to move. It will not answer to keep her moping at home, or to confine her to those narrow circles in which she will meet with those stupid, humdrum characters yecept saints; and where she can never make an eligible match.” How many a young man, too, who had hopefully taken upon him the yoke of Christ, has yet been lured from that Christian sphere, to which, at the outset of his profession, he confined himself, and in which he found it a sufficient task to keep the flesh

in subjection, though avoiding every unnecessary temptation, and using all the means of grace—has been lured, I say, into the same whirlpools of gaiety, in the hope of there meeting and furthering his suit with one on whom he should never have set his heart, and with whom, if he were spiritually-minded, he would never enjoy any happiness!

But how flimsy are such pretexts! how sad are the spiritual consequences of such a course! Even while following it, supreme friendship for the world and actual enmity to God, are often betrayed. The appointments of the world and the Church may sometimes clash. While the people of God, at their stated seasons of worship, are assembled, and seeking and enjoying communion with Christ, according to that promise: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," these apologists of worldliness are preparing their persons for, if they are not at the very time immersed in, scenes where God seldom enters, unless it be as Judge to note and condemn. Worldly habits and thoughts are gradually and habitually indulged. Spiritual associations are lost. Closet duties are discharged with little interest and profit. Public services lose their power and degenerate into little more than a mere form. Instead of growth in grace, there is actual backsliding; and it is but too evident that while the body is sometimes in accordance with Christian profession, loaned to the Lord, the heart is wholly given to the world. When the object, for which this routine of worldliness was avowedly begun, is reached, there are but little desire and no power to shake off the

chains which they recklessly fastened on themselves. The Spirit, who once graciously waited to sanctify and save, is withdrawn; and they ever after remain a melancholy instance and proof of the utter vanity of attempting to serve two masters.

We have alluded to only a few of the more common phases of the temptation and sin, whose character and consequences we have been endeavoring to depict, and time will not allow us to dwell on any more; but all that has been said is applicable to every endeavor to divide the heart and attention between God and any creature, between his service and the pursuit of any earthly object. It is not only the covetous, or the ambitious, or the gay professor, who is condemned by our Lord in the text, but the voluptuary, the glutton, the unchaste, the unfeeling, and if there be any other character in the visible Church inconsistent with the example of Jesus and the law of God—all are excluded, by this clause of the Sermon on the mount, from the true household of faith. Every such character is just as ready in urging excuses for his besetting infirmity and in maintaining the consistency of its indulgence with allegiance to Christ, as are those delinquents whom we have more at large portrayed. But the pleas of one and all will not endure scrutiny in the light of God's word; and the attempt to show in their own case the practicability of what is denied in the text proves fatal to their souls. It is required of the believer, that he seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, with the assurance, that other things shall be added unto him; and if this object be not supreme, if rivalry be allowed, the new lord will

soon be left to an undisputed dominion; for Jesus hath forewarned his disciples: "ye cannot serve two masters."

Fellow-soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no grace held in higher estimation by the Captain of our Salvation, than that of a single eye. When the hosts of Israel were all marshalled, it is said by the Spirit of Inspiration, in special praise of the fifty thousand of Zebulon "which could keep rank:" "they were not of double heart." Can the Rock of Ages have any sympathy with one who "is unstable in all his ways?" And such the inspired apostle pronounces "the double-minded man" to be. The curse of Reuben, Israel's first-born, was that "he should not excel," and he was disinherited, because "he was unstable as water"—The cause of his instability and ruin must, according to St. James, have been his double heart.

Oh! if you would not ever continue dwarfish in your spiritual stature—if you would not begin to grow weak and languid—if you would "strengthen the things which remain in you, and which are ready to die,"—if you would not bring yourselves under the final ban of God—"purify your hearts, ye double-minded." Set your face exclusively Godward, and let it be "like a flint." Such was the determination of the Son of God in his own house; and shall less be expected of the professed servants, when they have such a high example? It was written of Him: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;" and should not we be "fervent in spirit" in our service of the Lord? Shall a foreign affection be allowed to enter our hearts—to dilute our love for God—and make us

neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm, in our feelings towards him whom we have bound ourselves to serve? "It is good always to be zealously affected." Shall we, then, need some perpetual spur—some stirring sermon—some expostulation of a faithful Christian friend, to rouse us, ever and anon, to maintain a consistent spiritual walk? We were not half-redeemed; let us not therefore be content with serving God in part. "Ye were bought with a price,"—and that too, "not with such corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ,"—"therefore glorify God, in your bodies and your spirits which are his." "Ye cannot serve two masters;" but "the love of Christ should constrain you, and you should thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

But while we have dealt thus faithfully with the double-minded, there is a beloved class of our hearers, whom we must endeavor, in closing, to shield from any injurious effects from what has been said. Believers themselves, while they remain in the flesh, are not perfect, and do not attain, in their service of God, to that purity at which they aim. It is their constant confession, that what they would not that they do; and that what they do, that they would not. Their short-comings, however, are not wilful. They groan over them. It is a bondage to which they are unwillingly subject, and from which they desire to be freed. With an unevangelical severity, they are ready, on account of remaining sin, to doubt whether

they be really engaged in the service of God, and to fear that they have no right to the portion and hopes of his people. But, beloved, our Lord addresses not the warning in our text to such as you. On the contrary, upon the ground of his own merits, he accepts most favorably all your works of faith and labors of love. Your persons, as well as your offerings, he approves, and numbers with his own. He encourages you with all-sufficient promises and prospects. You shall realize your holy aspirations in all their fullness. You shall form one "of the spirits of the just made perfect." "Jesus shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation." "You shall be made like unto him, when you see him as he is." "You shall be satisfied, when you awake with his likeness." And, in the meanwhile, "let not other lords have dominion over us;" but, "as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden to the hand of her mistress; so let our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us."

## SERMON XXI.

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### THE TESTS AND OFFICE OF A VALID MINISTRY.—I.

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1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.

“LET A MAN SO ACCOUNT OF US, AS OF THE MINISTERS OF CHRIST, AND STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD. MOREOVER, IT IS REQUIRED IN STEWARDS, THAT A MAN BE FOUND FAITHFUL.”

AMONG the many subjects which are misunderstood, and consequently misapplied, that of the object of the ministry, and the position which it occupies in the economy of grace, stands prominent. Obvious reasons combine to render it liable to radical misconception. Apart from an infallible revelation, the pretension, that any set of men hold peculiar relations to God, and have any special right to speak in his name, is not worthy of consideration. Hence, all who do not recognize the divine origin of the Bible, will not yield to the exercise of any authority by a fellow-man, in the name of Christ. But serious misapprehension exists on this point, even within the pale of the Church of God. It is very easy, on the one hand, to regard those who are set over us in the Lord as inspired, and ourselves, therefore, as bound implicitly to follow all their directions; it is equally easy, on the other hand, to view the ministry in a simply professional light, and to regard them, like lawyers and physicians, as

exclusively dependent upon the application of their talents, and the study of their standard authors. Even a superficial and partial examination of the word of God itself will not enlighten any inquirer on this point, but tend, perhaps, only to confirm him in opinions, which exaggerate, or undervalue, the importance of the office-bearers in the house of God. For many declarations on this subject may be found in the sacred Scriptures, which had a special end in view, and which, therefore, should be explained and qualified by a comparison of the various passages which bear upon it.

Aside, therefore, from those who have adopted too high or too low an estimate of the rights and powers of the ministry, there is a large body of professed believers who have formed no definite notions respecting them, and who therefore act very inconsistently in reference to them, being swayed by their own personal or other capricious fancies. It was just so with the great mass of the Corinthian Church, when St. Paul addressed them in our Epistle. So incapable were they of examining the titles of those who claimed to be the ministers of Christ; so ignorant were they of the powers with which all were clothed, whose titles could be established; so free did they regard themselves in choosing, according to some earthly standard, between those who appeared as teachers and rulers in the house of God; that they who St. Paul intimates were mere human philosophers and rhetoricians, shared, in common with the apostle and his associates, the honor of being followed by many members of the visible family of God; and even St. Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, and Christ himself, were regarded as their

respective leaders by different sections of the Church. The apostle earnestly remonstrates with them on this man-worshipping and schismatical state, in terms like these: "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"

Such, then, was the condition of the Christians at Corinth, when our apostle was led to pen the declarations in the text, as an antidote to the errors and evils in their midst: and the two leading questions which suggest themselves for our consideration are these: First, *What are the Scriptural tests of a valid ministry?* and secondly, *What are the powers of such a ministry?*

Now, the reply to the question, *how a valid ministry is to be tested?* is found in the second verse of our text; which reads, "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." But the question immediately arises, *By whom are the stewards to be found faithful?* Who is the judge in the case? It is of course all important for us to settle this point; and in endeavoring to decide it, we have no objection to hear what either enlightened reason, or the Scriptures have to say upon it. Does St. Paul afford us any clue in this matter? By all means. If we look into the verses succeeding our text, we will find a very satisfactory answer: and perhaps, at the first reading, some will lay down the book, and say, No one has anything to do with judging in this matter, but the Lord; for the apostle expressly says, that "it was a very small thing that he should be judged of the Corinthians, or of man's judgment;" by which we see how he despised human opinion in the matter: nay, he proceeds, "I judge not

mine own self,"—from which it appears, that he refrained from forming any estimate of himself; and then, in exclusion of every creature from the honor and office of sitting in judgment upon his ministry, he declares, "He that judgeth me is the Lord." Nor can it be denied, brethren, that such a trial and judgment will be had. We read in the previous chapter, "Every man's [ministerial] work shall be tried; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is."

How solemn and eventful will be that day of the Lord to every professed minister of Christ! when his work shall be thus severely and infallibly tried! That day should be kept ever in view by all who hold office in the visible Church on earth. It should be the terror of every false or negligent apostle—while it should administer consolation and hope, to every faithful steward of God. But, my hearers, great and final as will be the judgment of that day, either our text supplies us with no present proofs of the validity of a man's claims to be the minister of Christ, or else it is not to the sentence of the last Judge that it refers us, as a means of finding out whether the steward of God is faithful: for it will then be too late to be benefited by the decision. Examine, then, the passage more closely; and you will perceive, that the judgment of the Lord in this case is to be delivered not in the first instance, but only as it is appealed to by one who has been wronged by a lower court, or else insufficiently tried. The expression of the apostle's contempt for the judgment of his ministry by his fellow-men, was

not based upon his denial of their right to form an opinion in the premises. For he well knew, that upon their reception or rejection of the doctrine which he taught, was suspended their everlasting salvation or damnation; and that the heavy responsibility of deciding in this matter for themselves was, therefore, imposed upon them. But St. Paul also knew, that their approval was not his reward, nor their condemnation his punishment, even if it were correct; and that, moreover, their decision was liable to mistake. Hence, he hesitated not to declare, that “with him,” i. e., so far as he was personally concerned, “it was a very small thing to be judged of the Corinthians, or of any man’s judgment.”

Thus, when the people and the professed minister of Christ disagree concerning the teaching and claims of the latter, there is no infallible tribunal on earth to which the parties can appeal, in order to settle the dispute. The decision must be reserved for the judgment of the Lord in the last day. It appears, therefore, that the apostle did not mean to declare in the second verse of our text, what is undoubtedly true, that the minister of Christ must be found faithful by the Lord; but that he must be found faithful by man. And his reason for insisting upon this was, that in the first verse, he had ascribed to the ministers of Christ the fearfully exalted and responsible title and office, of “Stewards of the mysteries of God.” He was, therefore, apprehensive, lest he should seem by such an ascription to have made them unlimited lords over God’s heritage; and he consequently added, that every such professed steward was to be found faithful

by the people, ere they allowed him to exercise in their case, this high trust. But at this point, a system of testing ministerial faithfulness has been devised, which relieves each individual soul of the responsibility of judging, and refers the decision exclusively to those who have been elevated to places of authority in the Church.

The whole Roman Catholic polity is based upon this theory; and many in our own Communion are its zealous defenders. According to this scheme, we are bound, in seeking for a minister of Christ, only to satisfy ourselves that he has been canonically ordained to this office by those who are set apart for this purpose, and that he is recognized as such by the authorities of the Church.

Now, far be it from us to undervalue the importance of proper regulations on this subject, in the house of God. They are both necessary and scriptural. Without them, the Church of Christ would soon be at sea, without any pilot, or be utterly at a loss into the hands of which of the numerous upstart and irresponsible candidates for the post, she should surrender the helm. On this very point, too, Timothy received these directions from St. Paul: "Lay hands suddenly on no man;" and "let the candidates first be proved." But while all this is freely acknowledged, still we insist that after and beyond this, the outwardly recognized ministers of Christ are to be subjected to a further trial at the hands of those to whom they minister; and that, at the peril of his soul, each individual hearer can shrink neither from the holding of such a trial, nor from the pronouncing of a right and scrip-

tural sentence in the case. This can be shown most conclusively in a few words.

From whence, we ask, did those false apostles whom St. Paul denounced in the Corinthian church, spring? Either they had what was recognized as regular ordination, or they had not. If they had not, then how, according to the scheme which we are opposing, is it to be accounted for, that St. Paul does not call the attention of his Corinthian brethren to the fact, that they had never been canonically ordained to the high posts which they were presuming to fill? This would have been, on the supposition before us, the direct and only conclusive mode of settling the controversy. On the contrary, he never once alludes to the subject. If now, on the other hand, they had been canonically ordained,—and this fact was a sufficient evidence of their faithfulness,—why does St. Paul occupy a considerable portion of both his epistles to them, in supplying his correspondents with the means of testing their authority to act as the ministers of Christ, and with urging them to be diligent in the application of those tests? All this would have been unnecessary, if they had already sufficient proof of their faithfulness in their being recognized as ministers by the authorities of the church: nay, it would have been worse than unnecessary—it would have been positively wrong, if it were neither the right nor the duty of those to whom he wrote, to bring their ministers to such a trial.

But, brethren, the truth of which we are endeavoring to convince you, is even more strikingly established. St. Paul does not hesitate to bring himself to

the judgment-seat of the Corinthian Christians, although his own commission to be a minister of Christ had been miraculously bestowed in the first instance, and had ever since been confirmed by the exercise of miraculous powers.

Although, too, it was but a small thing to our Redeemer and his apostle personally, to be judged of man's judgment, yet the reception or rejection of the message which they bore, inasmuch as their commission was divine, was to their hearers a matter of life or death.

Having thus settled the point, that the minister of Christ stands at the bar of each of his hearers, and that the judge is bound, by the most fearful sanctions, to deliver that sentence which God will approve, we come now to ask, *How can the scholar try the teacher?* How can an ignorant, fallen soul judge whether the doctrine which is presented to him be, or not, of God? How can a man ascertain whether he hears the deep and different truths of God in right proportions, and in such a way as should cause him to grow into the perfect stature of Christ? To this we reply, that he who is what God has a right to expect him to be, is supplied with abundant means of trying the ministry of the word, and of deciding as to its true character. God has not placed the sheep for whom Christ died, under the power of wolves dressed in sheep's clothing; neither does he allow his true Church, his Church within the Church, to be ruled by the ministers of Satan, who transform themselves, for this purpose, into the ministers of righteousness. When he who claims to be a minister of Christ, stands up in the

midst of a congregation of his fellow-creatures, with the avowed object of delivering a message from God, the hearers are furnished with the means of testing both his pretensions and his words. In reference to all such, they have previously received this direction: "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Thus we see, that every scripturally-minded hearer is provided with the means of defence against all erroneous teachers.

So far, therefore, as relates to his own personal edification, every one who makes God's testimonies his meditation, is able to declare with David, "I have more understanding than all my teachers." Yes, by the grace given to him, by the Spirit who is within him, there is an application made to his soul, of all God's word which he hears, infinitely more precious and saving than the best minister of Christ ever designed in his case, when he delivered to him the message of God. In the secret of rejecting what is hurtful, or of applying what is profitable to his own case, every disciple of Christ has more understanding than all who rise up to instruct him; and the humblest private Christian is in this, to him most important province, superior to the most exalted and gifted officer in the church.

Thus the most illiterate spiritual scholar can find out whether the experienced teacher is faithful. "My sheep," said Jesus, "know my voice, and they follow me; and a stranger will they not follow, nor be led by him; for they know not the voice of strangers." The light and the truth which God originally sent forth

to lead his children to his holy hill, they followed with conscious footsteps; and whenever it shows itself, they are capable of recognizing it again. They, too, can distinguish it from all the fire and sparks which men are able to kindle. The judgments which God has recorded in his word are, day by day, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb, to those who eat at his table; and creature husks they will not allow to be substituted for the bread of life. Thus, the testimony of the Lord is able to make wise the simple; and the commandment of the Lord is capable of enlightening the eyes.

Is, therefore, the Scripture an infallible test of the ministry in every hand? Is every reader of God's word capable of discriminating between those who really hold forth the word of life and those who preach another Gospel? Evidently not. The readers of the Bible are too notoriously divided in sentiment for any such idea to be maintained. The very epistle from which our text is taken, discloses a state of things utterly disproving it. One of the prophets of a people "whose were the covenants and the giving of the law, and the service of God and the promises," thus describes their condition: "We wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon-day as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men."

Unconverted fallen nature in a hearer, presents an insuperable obstacle to his using the word of God as the touchstone of the ministry. "The carnal mind

discerneth not spiritual things." Hence it is, that the great majority of Bible readers, under a ministry so largely unenlightened, are "like children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." This even happens where, with all that honesty which is consistent with pride and impenitence and unbelief, the hearer really does search the Scriptures, to ascertain whether the things which have been brought to his ears are so. But who knows not, that in this Bible land, where God has so abundantly supplied us with the means of testing the so-called preaching of the Gospel, even such insufficient attempts to use these means, and to determine whether what is heard be the mere word of man, or the truth of God, are by no means general?

When a man sets out to choose a minister for himself and family, the choice is very frequently determined by the delivery of the preacher in the pulpit, or the manners of the pastor in the social circle, or by the looks of the church building, or by the singing of the choir and the sound of the organ, or by the gentility of the congregation, or by the prospect of one's being made prominent and important, or by some doctrine being taught which is distasteful to the hearer, although it confessedly be in the word of God. Now, why should the Scripture be blamed for the divisions and heresies which exist, or be regarded as an insufficient umpire in the case, when the use for which it was intended is either wholly neglected, or else often attempted by those who, on account of their natural spiritual blindness, are utterly disqualified for the

effort? Does all this disprove what St. Paul teaches, that, under the faithful preaching of Christ's Gospel, the secrets of the heart of the unbeliever, who is for the first time convicted by the Spirit of God, or of the unlearned believer who is habitually under the influence of the Spirit, are made manifest, and he is authorized to testify that God is in the preacher of a truth?

Oh! brethren, it is no unauthorized trial of the minister of Christ, which the believing hearer holds in his own breast; it is no unauthorized sentence which he pronounces, when he finds him faithful; when he responds "Amen" to what has been said, and bids the preacher "God speed." Such a preacher and such a hearer have the same Gospel of Jesus held up before the eyes of each; and both, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Such fellowship through the word of God, is what is entitled "the communion of saints;" it is living and divine; it is a quickening and nourishing of the inward man; it is an assurance of our calling and election; it is an earnest of our heavenly inheritance. Such are the blessed fruits of that trial which the believing hearer is required to hold of the faithful steward of the mysteries of God.

The way in which a valid ministry can be tested, we have thus explained; but the consideration of the powers of such a ministry must be reserved for another time.

At this point, however, we are surely authorized to inquire of each of our people, *If you endeavor, in this*

*manner, to find out whether that steward of God's mysteries, under whom you have been placed, be faithful or not?* Vain is any other mode of trying your minister, than that which has been explained to-day. If you condemn him, unless it be on the ground of your finding him essentially unfaithful, according to that full and understanding interpretation of the Scripture, which those who are taught of God are alone enabled to give—whatever else be the ground of your condemnation, he is enabled to treat it as St. Paul did that of the earthly-minded Corinthians, as if it were a very small thing; he can appeal with confidence from your unjust sentence, to the judgment of the Lord. If, on the other hand, you find him faithful, on any other footing than the harmony which your spiritual insight discovers between his doctrine and that revealed in God's word, your acquittal will not arrest the final judgment in the day of the Lord; neither will the trial which you instituted confer any lasting good on yourselves, or be regarded as that which you were required to hold.

Oh! beloved, the hearing of the Gospel is no irresponsible pastime. The ministry are a savor of life unto life to those who are saved; and of death unto death to those who perish. When you are placed within the hearing of the Gospel, unless that enlightened and spiritual trial of the preacher, which you are required in our text to hold, is proceeding in your soul, you are not meeting the expectation of God, when he sent to you the messenger of his grace; you are throwing contempt upon his ordinance, which he has appointed for the salvation of men; and none can

measure the hardening and condemning effect of such a course. I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say. Give, then, the Lord no rest, until he bestow on you the blessed qualification of finding whether his ministers be faithful.

But, beloved Christian brethren, if the preaching of the cross be to them which perish foolishness, unto you which have been called, it is the power and wisdom of God. Although you know that the work of the ministry is in subordination to the Scripture, and even to your own illumination by the word and Spirit of our God, yet, in your own precious experience, you have found that it is the "gift" of Him "who ascended up on high" "for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man."

Whatever ridicule, too, may be thrown upon the seeming presumption of your bringing the highest dignitaries of the church to your own private bar, and pronouncing upon the validity of their ministry, you know it is an office from which you cannot shrink; since, at the peril of your souls, it is imposed on you by the great Head of the Church. Whatever evils, too, may flow from a perversion of this duty, or from the course of the enthusiast and the world under the shadow of its name, yet you do not fear, that in the true church, universal confusion would result from its right exercise by the disciples of Christ. For the form and principles of the trial of ministers by their spiritual hearers, are all provided for in the statutes

of an infallible book; and they are applied, in each case, by an infallible interpreter, the Holy Ghost.

With humble confidence, therefore, in the divine promise, you do not hesitate to undertake and discharge the high duties of judges in the courts of God. How blessed, too, is the exercise of this trust, when, under the teaching of the word and Spirit of God, you find a faithful minister of Christ! The blessed consciousness is then awakened within you, that you are yourselves the epistle of Christ, ministered by the preacher; written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart. The earthen vessels before you, which contain the treasure of the Gospel, become radiant in your eyes with the glory of Christ; while, in your turn, you become to them, by the witness of your renewed spirits and lives, the proofs and seals of their ministry, and their joy and crown of rejoicing in the Lord.

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## SERMON XXII.

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### THE TESTS AND OFFICE OF A VALID MINISTRY.—II.

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1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.

“LET A MAN SO ACCOUNT OF US, AS OF THE MINISTERS OF CHRIST, AND STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD. MOREOVER, IT IS REQUIRED IN STEWARDS, THAT A MAN BE FOUND FAITHFUL.”

OUR previous discourse on this text, pointed out the mark by which a valid ministry could be recognized. This was none other than an accordance in its exercise with every essential doctrine of the Holy Scriptures. The office, too, of applying this test, was assigned to all the hearers of the preached word; although it was shown, that only that class of hearers were qualified for this task, upon whose hearts and minds the divine laws had been inscribed, and who had thus themselves become epistles written by the Spirit of the living God. When, however, ministers have been found faithful in this scriptural way, the question immediately recurs, with even more force than it could originally have suggested itself, *What is the trust committed to their charge? with what powers are they clothed?*

This is the subject which was reserved for our present consideration. But before entering directly upon it, there is a point which it would seem neces-

sary to adjust, and which, when fully comprehended, will serve to throw much light upon our path. It is this: If the province of the ministry is limited by Revelation, and to such an extent, moreover, that all which they say and do is to be tested by God's written word, in the hands of its enlightened readers, *What room was there left in the house of God for such an order of men?* What were they to do which had not already been abundantly provided for? Could they not easily be dispensed with by all who possess the Scriptures? And in a community where the Bible is generally circulated, must they not be regarded as entirely super-numerary?

Some, indeed, do take this ground, and absent themselves from the sanctuary, and withdraw themselves from the whole circle of ministerial influence. But what is uniformly the result in such cases? We speak not now of those who are avowedly ungodly, and who despise not only the preached, but also the written word. We refer to those who profess to regard the Scriptures as all-sufficient, and who, under the pretext of finding more profit in closet prayer, and, in the private reading of the Bible, neglect the public services of God's house. What is the end of these separatists? Uniformly bad. If you observe such, you will find that they soon lose the proportion of faith: becoming engrossed with some idle speculations, darkness settles upon their minds and hearts, and they are at last thoroughly secularized in their spirits. Nor should we be surprised at these fearful results. For whoever thus neglects the ministry despiseth not man, but an undoubted institution of God. Ever since God

founded a church on earth, he has set apart a certain order of men to serve him in it, and, as his officers, he has required due respect to be paid them.

Under the Jewish Dispensation, it was a divine statute: "The man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken to the priest that standeth to minister before the Lord, even that man shall die." And not to multiply passages of similar import, we find Daniel, while confessing those grievous sins of his people which were punished by the heavy calamity of exile and captivity, giving prominence to this: "We have not hearkened to thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name." And this is a rule by which each of the followers of Jesus Christ is bound: "If one neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."

Now, although these and such like passages have been very much abused and perverted by the advocates of a ministry which cannot be found faithful, according to any scriptural standard; yet they surely have a most stringent meaning, when applied to those who neglect a ministry truly appointed and owned by the Head of the Church. Whether, then, we be able or not, to point out any of the reasons which operated upon the divine mind, in ordaining a set of teachers and officers over his people, is a small matter. That God has actually done this, is sufficient to impose upon us the obligation of using the ministry in an humble and docile spirit, looking up to him for a blessing on his own institution. The fact that this ministry has been appointed, is enough to bring under a just pun-

ishment all who despise it, or who employ it for other ends than its Divine Founder designed.

Such would seem to be the view which the Holy Ghost took of this matter, and upon which he has acted. For while the Scriptures, which were written by him, are full and explicit in relation to the fact that men are appointed to minister in his church by God, and in relation to the objects which they are to have in view; yet they are almost, if not altogether, silent respecting the reasons which led the God of all grace to accomplish these objects by such an agency. It is, however, clearly intimated, that this instrumentality was used by God, in communicating with his people, in condescension to their infirmities. The tribes were not able to endure God's immediate manifestation of himself, and he therefore spoke to them through his servant Moses.

As it was necessary, then, for creatures to be employed in this work, the experience of all God's people will attest how much better it was for men than angels to be set apart for this purpose. The sympathy which exists between those who feel alike and who are saved alike, imparts a tenderness and a preciousness to all the communications which we receive from God, through a human ministry—of which divine messages that should be borne to us by creatures who are of another nature, and who were never placed in circumstances like ourselves, would be wholly destitute. Let, then, this slight intimation of Scripture, and the universal experience of the saints, suffice to convince us of the wisdom of God's having appointed an order of ministers in his church; and let us at once search the

sacred page to learn the benefits which he actually confers through the human ministry of his word.

It is astonishing, brethren, with what dignity God clothed the ancient temple, or rather the service which was performed there by his appointed ministry! By what exalted and expressive terms he closely connected with it his own infinite majesty! It was called “the *sanctuary* of God.” We are told, “He hath desired it for his *habitation*. This is my *rest for ever*; here will I  *dwell*.” What a living image of himself must God have regarded the worship of the temple, when, in urging his ancient people to engage in it, he exhorts them in these words: “Seek ye *my face*.” Nor does St. Paul allow us to take a lower view of the office of the ministry, under the Christian dispensation. For he hesitates not to say that “God, who,” in the beginning, at the creation of the world, “commanded the light to shine out of darkness,” “hath shined in” the hearts of his *real* ministers, which, in their native state, were as spiritually dark as the earth was at first naturally dark, that He might give to others, by the radiation from ministers’ hearts, “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

But, while the Scripture thus magnifies the place and occupation of public worship on earth, it would utterly discountenance any superstitious rest in such service; it would remind us, that there is a higher temple, for which worship here, in its best estate, only fits us; it would lift up the eyes of earthly worshippers to Him who sits upon the throne in heaven, by assuring them that the place in which they are now

offering sacrifices and incense to God, is but his “footstool.” This it does, when it urges the saints to “worship at God’s footstool;” and when the Psalmist leads the people into the temple with this song: “We will go into his tabernacles; we will worship at his footstool.”

Thus, all the worship which, under the leading of God’s human ministers, is offered here on earth, we must never forget, is only acceptable when it is regarded by us as ascending to heaven, and offered again according to the law of those upper courts, put into the censer of Christ, and presented before the eternal throne. But, even under this qualified conception of the appointed ministerial service of God, how exalted is its nature, how precious are its results!

If we look into the infallible word of God, we shall find each and every part of the change which is required to be wrought in fallen souls, ere they enter upon the inheritance of the saints in light, attributed to the ministers of Christ. It was prophesied to his father, of the great forerunner of our Lord, before his birth, and the prediction was fully accomplished in his subsequent course, “Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.”

In conferring, too, a commission upon one of his ministers, after his own ascension, our Lord expressly states the object for which he was ordained, in these words: “Unto whom, now, I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.” This

same apostle, moreover, tells a portion of that numerous company of believers, who, through his ministry, had become the children of God, "Ye have not many fathers; for, in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the Gospel." Again, he addresses others of them, whose apostacy he had reason to fear: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."

We thus see what a close connection exists between the faithful ministers of Christ and that mighty renewal of a man's nature, without which no child of fallen Adam can ever enter into the kingdom of God. So direct, too, is the agency of the ministers of Christ in the great majority of cases in which souls are born again, that every spiritual mind sees the justness and force of all that is here ascribed to them in the word of God. Indeed, the instances of such changes, where the instrumentality of ministers does not appear, are comparatively rare; and even these seem to be allowed for the purpose of preventing any undue honor being paid to the ministry, by showing that the blessing of salvation can be conferred without them; and that it rests with a sovereign over all, to decide what channels he will employ to convey his mercies to our souls.

When, therefore, the Bible itself, or some pious, but uninspired book, or some private Christian friend, or some sanctified affliction is used directly, and almost exclusively, in our conversion, it is only to hinder the idolatry of the appointed means, and it does not prove that those means are not the ordinary channel through which the blessing is bestowed.

But to proceed: Not only is the *new birth*, but like-

wise *faith*, by which we become connected with Christ, are justified at God's bar, and receive the promise of salvation, is attributed in the Scriptures to the ministers of Christ. Our Lord, in his prayer for the blessing of his Father on those whom he was about to send forth, teaches this doctrine, when he expresses himself in these words: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." Two of his ministers, moreover, we are told, upon one occasion, "so spake that a great multitude, both of the Jews and also of the Greeks, believed." These questions, too, are asked by an apostle: "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" And the inference which he draws from this is, "So, then, faith cometh by hearing."

But why multiply the quotations of passages which are so numerous and obvious on the sacred page? It is plain, that among all creature means for implanting in our hearts the root grace of faith, the Bible assigns the supreme place to the ministers of Christ's word. We might proceed to enumerate all the graces which constitute the character of the new man; and we would, in like manner, find that they are traced by an inspired pen to the ministry, as their great visible source. But let all be embraced under one term; for the Bible declares, that the ministers of Christ were ordained for the purpose of *building up* and *edifying* the people of God. This institution, we are expressly told, was designed "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the

body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Speaking, too, of Christ, St. Paul says, "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." "Night and day," also, the same apostle declares to his Thessalonians, that he "prayed exceedingly to see their face," that he "might perfect that which was lacking in their faith."

Such, then, is the important sphere assigned to the ministers of Christ in the Church of God. The question before us is not, whether the great Head of the Church could not have dispensed with their service; neither is it, whether he does not actually carry on his work of saving grace, in some cases, without them. This is not only freely admitted, but it should sometimes be insisted on. It is occasionally necessary to show, that even undoubted and faithful ministers of Jehovah are utterly powerless, unless they are accompanied by a divine grace, which always exerts its prerogative of sovereignty; otherwise, we could not disprove the preposterous claims which are frequently advanced in behalf of ministers who cannot be found faithful by any Scriptural test. But the question which we are now required to answer is, For what is the ministry ordinarily used in Christ's Church. And in reply, we have shown, that by them, conversion, faith, and even perfection, are attained. Nor can these high claims for the ministry be at all invalidated, by reminding us, that they are altogether

subordinated to the written word of God; that their very pretensions to speak in the name of God are to be tested by every hearer with the sacred Scriptures; and that it is their duty to appeal to the same sacred page. For while all this is readily acknowledged; nay, while we would still further contend, that the holy Scriptures, without the aid of the ministry, are able to make us wise unto salvation, and are sometimes used in this way; yet God's ordinary mode of enlightening the readers of the Bible is to send to them some teacher—just as he directed Philip to the Ethiopian when he was reading Isaiah in his chariot; or as Jesus himself joined the two disciples, who were going to Emmaus, and talked with them by the way, and opened to them the Scriptures, until their hearts burned within them. And it is not too much to say, that unless God's grace worked in a much greater proportion by other means, than it does at present, the correct and saving knowledge of the Scriptures would soon be lost, if the Church should undertake to dispense with the ministers of Christ.

Do any now ask, whether we hold, that the powers which have been claimed for the ministry, are inherent in them, inseparable from them, so that they exert these powers in all that they do and say; or can at least withhold, or put them forth, at will? To this we answer emphatically, *No*. It is simply and exclusively the accompanying Spirit of God, who clothes their work with power, whenever it is effectual. All who become "the sons of God," we are told, "were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God:" we read, moreover, that

“Except a man be born of the Spirit of God, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.” How often, too, do the ministers of Christ have cause to ask, with the prophet, “Who hath believed our report?” The secret of their occasional success is revealed in this Scripture: “The hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord.” The believing Hebrews were exhorted to look unto Jesus as “the author and finisher of faith;” and the Ephesian Christians were taught, that “by grace they were saved, through faith; and that not of themselves; it was the gift of God.” And, as if to show the mere instrumentality of himself and his colleagues, in the spiritual blessings which the Corinthians had received, by their agency, the apostle asks: “Who then is Paul? and who is Apollos? but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” So that from the beginning to the end, all success is to be attributed to the Spirit of God. Neither is the desire which the ministers of God entertain in their work always gratified; but as Lord over all, the Spirit moves; either utterly withholding, or else “dividing to every man severally as he will.”

In calling your attention, moreover, brethren, to the frequent withholding of divine influence from the ministry, we have pointed out the chief cause of its want of success. When inquiries are made on this subject, some refer to the enmity of the natural heart to God’s will and grace; some attribute it to the opposition which the adversary of souls exerts; some insist

upon the special hindrances which the word encounters in the places where it is preached. No doubt, all of these are important obstacles in the way of ministerial success. But the main cause will be found in the lack of the presence and work of the Spirit of God. When he chooses, he uses the preached word of God as his own sword, before which every enemy is discomfited; when he works with them, "the weapons of a minister's warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing which exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Nor let it be hastily concluded, because the work of the ministry does not always convert, that therefore it has failed of its end: for the promise reads, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world;" and again we are told, "My word shall not return unto me void." So that we would fully adopt these sentiments of another, "Where the ministry fails to convert, we may still be assured, that it convinces, reproveth, exhorts, enlightens, or consoles, some one in some measure, at all times. It never "returns to God void," when delivered in the simplicity of faith; nor will it, under the most unpromising circumstances, fail of accomplishing his unchangeable purpose.

We trust now it fully appears, that, notwithstanding the blessed gift of the holy Scriptures, there was room left in the Church of God for the ministers of Christ; and that the benefits which are conferred through them are by no means small.

But now the question recurs, with much force,

*What is the office of Christ's ministers?* With what powers are they clothed? In what light are they to be viewed? To this our text now almost of itself, without explanation, satisfactorily replies: "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." First, then, we are to be esteemed as *the ministers of Christ*. In all that we undertake and say in our office, we are to be ministers, i. e., *servants* of Christ; feeling that we are bound to obey his will, and actually carrying out his directions: never venturing to teach any doctrines or to devise and pursue any plans, which originate with ourselves, or which are intended to subserve our private ends; as though we were "lords over God's heritage;" never shunning to declare the whole counsel of God, or consulting with flesh and blood what we shall withhold and what dispense; but in all these things we are to be servants—servants, however, in a different capacity from those members of the Church who are not called to the office of ministers; servants in the discharge of the duties of this office, as those duties are laid down in God's written word: servants, in one aspect of the case, of the humblest kind; the servants of servants; the servants of the other servants of God's house: "If any man will be great among you," said our Lord, "let him be your minister," i. e., servant; and again, St. Paul describes himself and his fellow-apostles as the "servants" of other believers "for Jesus' sake." It is honor enough to be recognized as the servants of Jesus, in the capacity of ministers, even though he may assign us, in this capacity, to the work of serving others. It is greater

honor to be the real servants of Christ in the ministerial office, than it is to be compassed about with any fire and sparks which we may kindle. They who Scripturally occupy this post shine with the reflected light of God; they are the visible “glory of Christ.” Yea, every true minister of Christ has cause with the apostle, to “magnify his office.”

But what, in the second place, is committed to their charge, as “the ministers of Christ?” We read in our text, they are “stewards of the mysteries of God.” Oh! noble and precious trust! to have in keeping “the mysteries of God!” Nothing which the astronomer can spy with his telescope in the heavens above; nothing which the geologist can dig out of the bowels of the earth; nothing which can be discovered by chemical analysis; nothing which the microscope can bring to light in the invisible world; nothing in the wide kingdom of universal nature; no law of states; no reasoning of moralists; no conclusion of philosophers; no creature wisdom, is entitled to, or receives in the sacred Scriptures, the name of a “mystery of God:” but we are told, that “the preaching of Jesus Christ is the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.” Yea, all the divine wisdom, as brought out in the eternal counsel of the three Persons of the Godhead, is concentrated in the plan of redeeming souls by Jesus Christ. And such an understanding of this great mystery of God, as is necessary to explain it to others, is officially vouchsafed to the ministers of Christ. When the multitude, to whom our Saviour had been uttering his incomprehensible parables, had retired; and the apos-

tles gathered around him with the request that he would explain, he cheerfully complied—saying, “Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.” And oh! what needed help does every faithful minister of Christ experience, in God’s own times and ways, while preparing for, and discharging his work! The poor is made rich; the foolish wise; the weak strong. Ready to acknowledge in the unfeigned anguish of experience, that he “is unable of himself to think anything as of himself;” ready to cry out, in view of the pressing responsibilities of his work, “Who is sufficient for these things?” he yet is possessed with energy from above, and issues from his closet, with the conviction, that his “sufficiency is of God.” What he has been shown in secret, that according to direction of him whose minister he is, he reveals upon the housetop. He keeps not “the mysteries of God,” which have been committed to his charge locked up for his own exclusive use; but, like a faithful steward, he freely disburses them among his master’s servants; that all may be partakers with himself. And, when the steward, and each of his fellow-servants, by the present help of the Holy Ghost, appropriates to himself his own share, what communion is here! whether it be in prayer, or preaching, and hearing, or administering and receiving the sacraments of Christ—whatever be the mystery revealed, “the fellowship of all is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ!” Nor, if it be an optional, is it ever an irresponsible matter, whether we hear, or whether we forbear. All is done in the name of Christ, and by the authority of God; it is, to all who are brought

within its influence, the turning point of salvation or perdition; and while in the faithful discharge of their stewardship, ministers are “unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life.”

And now, in the brief application of our subject, we ask, have you, my hearers, in your hearts, and practically, “so accounted of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God?” What spiritual blessing, my unconverted friend, has the gracious institution of the ministry ever conferred upon your soul? All the guilt of your original and actual sins still rests upon your conscience: all the darkness of nature still reigns in your spiritual house: corruption and lust still have dominion within: your heart is unchanged; you have none of that faith, without which it is impossible to please God; you are without any part or lot in Christ; without hope and without God in the world; you are unfitted to serve and enjoy God in this imperfect state, much less are you qualified for it in heaven. You have made choice of my ministry, and have frequently come within its influence. As yet you have received no real and lasting benefit through it. If not blessed, fearful will be the connection which exists between us. If not set for your rising, I am for your falling. If you be not my joy in the judgment; my ministry will be your accuser and condemner. Oh! pervert not the gracious connection which now subsists between us, and which might be so blessed, into an eternal curse. Would that it might be effectually, and to your salvation,

that we call upon you now to “behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.” We make known to you the mystery, that “God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;” and that he “hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

May I not, also implore you, Christian brethren, to combine with me in making fuller proof of my ministry? Oh! appreciate more those precious blessings, which God designed to convey to you through this channel of his grace. Mourn over the meagre share of them which reaches you. Pray for me, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift. Glorify the Holy Ghost by feeling the necessity of his presence in the work of the ministry, and by supplicating constantly for his sovereign help. Thus the word of God will have freer course, and be more glorified among us. My speech and my preaching will be in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; and my Gospel will come to you, not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. Amen.



## SERMON XXIII.

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THE FULLNESS AND THE FREENESS OF CHRIST.

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Isaiah lv. 1.

“HO, EVERY ONE THAT THIRSTETH, COME YE TO THE WATERS, AND HE THAT HATH NO MONEY; COME YE, BUY AND EAT; YEA, COME, BUY WINE AND MILK WITHOUT MONEY AND WITHOUT PRICE.”

THIS earnest invitation will sound very differently in different ears. There are some, who are prepared to welcome it as the most cheering news. These are ready to confess with the psalmist: “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O, God: my soul thirsteth for God, yea, even for the living God.” When they hear, as in the verse before us, the riches of what the Gospel has to offer extolled—when they learn, as our text teaches, that the most unworthy and destitute are allowed an unrestricted participation—then, their past enjoyment of this spiritual feast renews an inward desire to accept the call, and a present hungering and thirsting prompt them to hasten toward the table which the Lord has spread.

But there are others, to whom this confession of the psalmist, which every Christian adopts as his own, appears at least mysterious, and perhaps even foolish. They are disposed to inquire—“How can a soul

thirst?" or even if this figurative expression be allowed—"How absurd is it for a creature spirit to profess a *thirst* for a Spirit that created it!" will then be their exclamation. "In what way," they triumphantly ask, "could such an unnatural thirst ever be gratified?" We might somewhat alter our Saviour's interrogatory to Nicodemus, and ask each of these querists: "Wast thou born, and hast thou been bred in a Christian land, and knowest not these things?" But we will not affect surprise, where none is felt. We would simply turn off your attention from things which will not profit, from inquiries which in your present state you will never be able to answer, and direct it to points at which a seeker for spiritual truth should begin, and from which he may be gradually led along easily and gladly over more advanced stages of his pilgrimage—where an attempt to walk now, would only bewilder and destroy.

The school of Christ may be characterized, by way of eminence, as one that is experimental. "Whosoever doeth his will, shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." In learning the language of Zion, you must not expect to speak fluently yourself—nor even to understand the conversation of the more advanced scholars, before you have been taught the alphabet—before those who speak it as their native tongue are able to discern in your accents even the lisping of a babe in Christ, before you have been indeed born into the kingdom of God. Be not on the one hand discouraged, because you are a barbarian to the Christian, and the Christian a barbarian to you. He was born in your native land; and through the same assistance

which he has received, you may attain to the same understanding as he. Be not, on the other hand, proud and contemptuous. Deem not the preacher, whom God has appointed to cry to you in the text, a mad man, because he speaks in terms which you are not qualified at present fully to comprehend, or to explain in consistence with the soundness of his judgment. Divest yourself now of pride. "Be converted, and become like a little child." If you will enter upon its brief consideration in this mood, there may be that found in our text which will prove of infinite moment to your soul. At present you may not understand the full import of some of the terms through which God addresses you in the words before us, and you may thus unwittingly exclude yourself from blessings which can be neither measured nor exhausted.

Let us now look at our text. It is easy, of course, for every one to perceive, that here under the figure of *thirst*, all who have an earnest desire for the thing which is proffered, are addressed. Under the term of *waters*, that which will refresh and satisfy is meant. As the living and cool streams of a rocky fountain revive the weary and thirsty traveller, so what the Spirit offers in our text will gratify the desires of the needy, and cheer the hearts of the desponding whom he addresses. But water, though refreshing to the weary, is scarcely an emblem of luxury and wealth. The table of the rich is covered with more sumptuous fare. By *wine* and *milk*, therefore, the Holy Ghost would signify those higher and more precious blessings which he would fain confer upon those souls whom in our text, he calls.

Need we further say, that the Spirit's express exclusion of *money* in the purchase, or of *price* in the sale of his benefits, was intended to represent the absolute freeness with which he bestows his inestimable gifts? With this brief reference to what is of itself obvious, we come to the explanation of three points in our text, which, perhaps, now stand in the way of some of our hearers' closing with the offer which it makes.

First, some may suppose that *they have no such desire for Gospel blessings, as is fairly entitled to the name of thirst.*

Secondly, there may be others who *have such a low appreciation of the riches of Christ, as to conceive that they cannot justly claim the right of being represented by such emblems as water, milk, and wine.*

And, thirdly, there may be others who *do not clearly perceive the freedom of the terms upon which they can enter on those spiritual benefits which they acknowledge to be rich, and for which they have the most irrepressible desire.*

First, then, *Whom does the Holy Ghost include in the invitation before us?* We read, "every one that thirsteth." Here, some may unnecessarily shut themselves out from great blessings, by a misapprehension of what is meant. They may say, "So far from desiring to depart and to be with Christ, as though that were far better, we must honestly acknowledge that the thought of meeting his eye, as we shall stand before his judgment-seat, is full of terror to our souls. We can easily understand the prayer of Peter: 'Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man.' Should the Son of God

manifest himself now unto us, we would desire to be relieved from his presence. If the assurance that we should never meet him, could be given us, we would be delivered from the prospect which we most fear. How, then, can we be considered as one who thirsteth for God?" But, although unable to adopt this language now, or even to comprehend its exact meaning, would not a great difficulty be removed out of your way, in using these words as expressive of the feeling of your heart; if God, by his grace and power, should divest you of all fear; if, as he should disclose himself to your view, when, like Daniel, your loins trembled and your knees shook, he should put forth his hand, and, by its touch, strengthen you, and enable you to commune with him face to face, without fear? Have you no natural curiosity and longing to see your Maker and Preserver—so infinite, and upon whom you depend for all things? Would you not consider yourself as then in the presence of One, whose favor and love being secured, he could confer on you all that you wish and all that you need, make you all that you ought to be, and grant you all that your greater knowledge would prompt you to seek, and all that your enlarged capacities would require? Do you not thus thirst after what God could do in your behalf? And, although not able now to say that you thirst after God, yet do you not feel a desire for what God could bestow on your soul? Do you hesitate to admit even thus much in your own favor? As you look upon the professed people of Christ in this world, would you shrink from being made altogether like one of them? While there may be ground on which you

and some of them in common stand—while there may be points of sympathy between you and Christian men, yet have you seen enough of the believer's character to know, that on the subject which most engrosses his thoughts, and most enlists his heart, there is an impassable gulf between you and him? Would you decline exchanging even your own uncertain, fleeting, and unsatisfying enjoyments for such as his? Do you suppose that the mine in which he digs has no treasure, while in that which you explore there is some gold, though it be mingled with much alloy?

But your view of the case is short-coming. All that God has done for those souls is not visible to the outward eye. Such pleasures as they can recount to your carnal ear, may have no attraction for your natural heart. But God hath changed their heart, and caused them to love that which they once hated, and to hate that which they once loved. They have an inward joy with which a stranger intermeddled not. They have been transformed into the image of God, and in their exalted powers and affections, reach and experience joys which other eyes cannot see, and other ears cannot hear, and other hearts cannot understand.

Suspect not that the disappointments and sorrows and wants of your fallen nature would not be removed, if you should be born again; if God should inwardly fit you for the enjoyment of all that he could bestow. You may be consciously in need of what God only can confer; you may be in want of what the state and possessions of the Christian alone can supply, although, in your natural ignorance and pride, you

would regard it as the virtual suicide of your soul, to request the presence of God, and the attainment of what the Christian is and has. Oh! beloved, you may be addressed in the text, although you would not dare to say that you thirsted for God, nor yet that you desired to be such as we. That indefinite thing for which we are persuaded that you long—although you would describe it in very different terms, and seek for it in a very different way—among all things, God only can confer, and, among all men, Christians only have attained.

We ask not, then, whether you consciously thirst after God? whether, in all that you know or suspect of its length and breadth, you are prepared to become a Christian man? But do you thirst for something which as yet you have not found? Have you been disappointed in your past course, and in the objects you have hitherto pursued? Would your past experience make you hesitate, if, like Solomon, you had the choice of whatever you should ask, before you named the bestowment or the increase of any earthly good? Do you doubt whether a man's life does consist in the abundance of the goods which he possesseth? Are you ready to confess that thus far, in the words of the verse succeeding our text, "you have spent your money for that which satisfieth not?" if you be not numbered among the abandoned and the reckless,—among those of the unconverted who only long for more of what they have already had; who, in the expressive language of Scripture, "have eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin," then you are one of those thirsty souls to whom the Spirit calls

in our text, and whom he assures, that if you will hearken diligently unto him, you will eat that which is good, and your soul shall delight itself in fatness: "Come ye to the waters; yea, come, buy wine and milk."

We are thus led to the consideration of our second point; which is, that *the provisions of Christ's grace are, as is clearly intimated in the text, amply sufficient for every want and desire of our souls.* In our spiritual experience, they will indeed prove to be "water, milk, and wine." Each of these terms is used by Moses, when he would raise the promised Canaan in the estimation of the people whom he led. He describes it as "a land of brooks of waters," as one flowing with "milk and honey;" and he speaks of "the wine and the oil" which they should enjoy in profusion there. These terms, then, aptly figure the resources and fruits of that spiritual Canaan to which you are invited in our text: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."

In every one of our unconverted hearers, then, now addressed, we have a right to suppose that a conviction of the vanity and unsatisfyingness of earthly things exists. You may not be ready as yet to admit that you will find in the provisions of the Gospel what you need. Still, you turn away from the world, and inquire, "Who will show us any good?"

We desire, now, to lead you on a step, and to point out what the necessity is in your case. However little you may hitherto have suspected the nature either of your wants or of the remedy required, we would yet confidently appeal to your present convic-

tions, and ask, If an assurance of present and unending peace with God, would not remove something that is always uncomfortable, and sometimes oppressive to your spirit? If, instead of "being afraid when you consider," you should, like "Abraham, the friend of God," be addressed by the great Object of your terror in these consoling words, "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward," would you not at once be translated into a state of freedom from present bondage, into a world of new joys and hopes?

Now, the Gospel which we preach proposes to introduce you to this state. What now separates between you and your God, and proves a bar to such blessed communion between your spirit and his, as we have referred to, is your sins. There is enough in these to raise an insurmountable and eternal obstacle between the holy God and you. The more you reflect upon their ill-desert, the more insupportable will be your fears. As an heavy burden, they will prove too heavy for you. Like a weary and fainting traveller, you will be ready to sink under their oppressive weight. It is precisely in this dry and thirsty land, where no water is, that the Gospel pool is found. It discloses a fountain for sin and for uncleanness. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." It was shed to pay the penalty of all your past, present, and future sin. All the indebtedness that you have incurred, or may hereafter contract, it can remit, and for ever cancel in God's book. If any provision is able to lift up the weary and heavy-laden sinner's heart, it is this. Well may the Saviour cry: "If any man thirst, let him

come unto me and drink." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."

But these "waters" are more efficacious still. Mingled with the blood which flowed from Jesus' side, and which taketh away sin, there ran a stream of water. The first was shed to show that the sinner's guilt was borne, and that he need no longer view himself as appointed unto wrath. The last typifies that "living water," of which whosoever drinks, shall never thirst; in which whosoever washes, shall be clean every whit. It represents the Spirit of God, who changes the fallen heart, giving it new desires, new feelings, and new powers; who takes up his abode in the disciple's soul, by his strength binding the strong man who had always been in possession, purifying those vessels which had been used in the service of another God in this inner temple, and ultimately expelling all that defileth, presents us faultless in the presence of God.

Surely, these are wells of salvation. He who is brought to them, and who washes, is cleansed; he who drinks, is refreshed. Joy and hope spring up in that heart. From having been of his father, the wicked one, he is translated into the family of God. The spirit of heavenly adoption is shed abroad within. He looks upward, and cries, "Abba, Father." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." But this late wanderer, so unclean and fainting, now washed and refreshed by those "living waters" to which he had recourse, is, as a "new man," introduced into "the household of faith." He sits down to the table which his Father spreads. He is prepared with his

new tastes, to enjoy the bounties with which it is furnished. He finds them "wine and milk." Even the richest luxuries of which that table boasts, may seem to mere natural eyes like uninviting fare. Carnal tastes may revolt. But there the Lord Jesus presides. The last supper was a type. There the disciple has the trouble of his heart dispelled by Jesus' cheering words. He attains the peace which Jesus gives, with which Jesus himself is blessed. It is his privilege to lean on Jesus' breast, and to ask and receive replies from Jesus' mouth.

Such is the heritage of the followers of Christ. The outward scene may change; yet, under all circumstances, the "wine and the milk" are supplied to the disciples' soul. The Father and the Son manifest themselves unto him, as they do not unto the world. Earthly treasures and children may be swept away by the natural or human agents of God's will; yet in all, the disciple, like the patriarch of Uz, is strengthened to feel and say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Earthly friends may scorn, but, like this same afflicted saint, he is supported by the consciousness that "his witness is on high, and his judgment with his God." "Father and mother may forsake," but, like David, he finds by experience, that "then the Lord taketh him up." As he watches the ebbing life of some loved one, his eye may be suffused with tears; but hopeless sorrow is effaced by the assurance that he shall go to the departed, though this last may not return to him.

Disease may even remove the disciple from outward

communion with saints, and from the enjoyments of earth. Few and wretched may be the creature comforts and remedies with which his chamber is supplied; yet the Lord maketh his bed in all his sickness. When at last his hour comes, he breathes with confidence his soul into the hands of that "Lord God of truth who redeemed him with his own most precious blood." On angels' wings the released spirit is borne to the bosom of Abraham, and reclines at the marriage supper of the Lamb. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; yea, come buy wine and milk." Oh! who will not admit that Christ is the rich treasure-house for fallen souls? He is the very fullness of the Godhead bodily. It is he for whom you thirst, whom you really need, my unconverted hearer, though you know it not.

But, methinks that some may say: "This testimony of Christ is true. Long have we been convinced that he is all we want. But how shall we attain our heart's desire? With what sum shall we purchase this inalienable and blessed interest in God's incarnate Son?"

This leads us to our third and last point, *the absolute and unqualified freeness of Christ's gifts*. Let our precious text establish this all-important truth. If there be any of the momentous lessons which it teaches, prominently above the rest, it is this. Hear what it says: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price." It is not only he "that thirsteth," but he that "hath no money," who is invited; and whether we be without or with any appearance of

money, still the water, the wine, and the milk of the Gospel are to be bought, in each and every case alike, "without money and without price." Need we say how counter this is to at least the practical conviction of the natural heart? There are not wanting men who, if they would search their inner house with a candle, would find that even the offering of material money—white silver and yellow gold—is, in some measure, secretly relied on for commendation unto God.

Ah! Lord, how frequently do thy dependent creatures provoke thee in this grossly offensive way! and, instead of thankfully rendering to thee of thine own, think that the gift of God can be purchased with literal money. But if the avowal of this gross simony be rare, who can say that he is wholly free from simony of a more subtle and spiritual sort? Are there not many who might detect themselves in the secret attempt to purchase of the holy God the benefits of Christ's grace, by ceasing from evil, or by bearing the cross, or by the varied acts of a holy life? Is not their name legion, who withhold themselves from Gospel privileges and blessings, until, by their own efforts, or by the so-called Spirit's work, they are rendered worthy partakers of Christ's redemption? How few they are who venture to buy the wine and milk of the Gospel, "without money and without price!" who dare to come in faith, just as they are, walking in the by-ways and hedges of the world, when they receive the call of Christ! They are too unworthy in their own conceptions. They must prepare to meet their God. They must purchase the wine

and the milk with at least some spiritual money. They would not dare to drink of the water of life freely.

Oh! tell me, are there not many of your fellow-creatures whom you would fear to offend by offering them remuneration, when you had been invited to sit down at their board? And shall God be thus insulted in our most secret thoughts? Dependence upon God is the lesson which even angels, who excel in might, will continue to learn throughout their endless being; and as they grow in the sense of their own inherent weakness, they will be more and more perfected in the strength of God. But fallen man is required not only to lean on the divine arm, but to trust exclusively in Christ, as the righteousness of God. The provision of merit is part of that "wine and milk" with which the Lord has spread his Gospel table, and to which he invites our sinful souls. It is a chief ingredient of those "waters" by which the sinner's faint spirit is revived. The Gospel-God never manifests himself, but as one showing mercy to unrighteousness. Without qualification, "he justifieth the ungodly." "Come unto me," is Christ's invitation, without any stipulation for preparation or delay; "come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest:" and "him that cometh unto me," the assurance is, "I will in no wise cast out."

Come, then, to Jesus, though you be destitute, and large debtors unto God; for every sum that you owe, your Redeemer has paid. Come, though your sin rise up like a mountain; for your load of ill-desert your divine sacrifice has borne in his own body. Come

in all your naked corruption, and be clothed with Christ as the righteousness of God. Such exclusive trust in Jesus, is the sum total of all that you must feel and do. He who hath this trust, hath come to the Son; he hath been drawn to the Father; he is a child of God, made such by the renewal of the Spirit; he is prepared to enter on the pursuits and joys of the household of faith; to partake, with a thankful heart, of the wine and milk of the Gospel. He sits down at the Lord's table, clothed in a wedding-garment, and as an accepted guest. He is admitted on earth to some measure of that closer intimacy with God, which is the privilege of the redeemed of Christ. He hath in reserve a song to learn which angels cannot sing. He is to grow not only in holiness, like them, but in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He is to increase not only in conscious weakness and divine strength, like them; but he is to partake more and more of that wine and milk with which the heavenly Canaan flows only for those who have been redeemed from the earth. He is to be a king and a priest unto God and his Father for ever.

Who, then, will shut himself out from this Gospel gift—this gift so freely, so graciously bestowed? “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price.”



## SERMON XXIV.

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GOD, THE HELP OF THE SPIRITUAL SUICIDE.

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Hosea xiii. 9.

“OH! ISRAEL, THOU HAST DESTROYED THYSELF; BUT IN ME IS THINE  
HELP.”

THERE is enough in the first clause of this text to dishearten, to cast down, and to kill every unregenerate hearer; there is enough in the second to make alive, to raise up, and to inspire with joyful hope. In the most summary way, by the use of a single word, our natural condition is declared to be as wretched and hopeless as it can possibly be: we are said to be “destroyed.” We are not cautioned against destruction as an evil which is near and threatening, and into which we may fall, or which may overtake us; but, according to our Scripture, we are already involved in it. Neither does God use words inconsiderately; he does not exaggerate. He means all that he says; and what he means and says is only in accordance with the fact. We are “destroyed.” All nature affords no prospect, no possibility of deliverance in any way or degree. There is no strength to rescue, no hope to be realized, no life to accept and enjoy salvation.

“There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof

will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet, through the scent of water, it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost; and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up, so man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."

This simile and statement, which Job uses to illustrate and describe bodily death, is, according to our text, (for we waste not words to prove what is evident—that what it affirms of the temporal condition of Israel is, and was intended to be applicable to the situation, by nature, of every fallen soul,)—it is true, we say, of the spiritual state by nature of our race; in its root and branch, we are "dead in trespasses and sins;" we are "destroyed." But the text, moreover, tells us a truth which clothes even despair with additional terrors; which mixes remorse with despair, and which renders us, in our desperation, self-haters. It would endue us with some moral courage, and afford us some solace, if we knew that our calamities had been brought upon us through another's agency and fault, by an act in which we were not implicated; but the text assures us these evils have been inflicted upon ourselves by ourselves. With a suicidal arm we plunged the dagger into our own bosoms. "Thou hast destroyed thyself." Oh! what overwhelming reflections, what an intolerable consciousness does this fact awaken even in this world, when we obtain a few glimpses of it under the convictions of sin! What

untold and inconceivable agonies will it not cause, should we ever realize it, in all its fullness, in the world of woe!

But, although involved in all the despairing and remorseful wretchedness of this self-destruction, from which it is impossible for all creatures to deliver us, yet there proceeds, through our text, a voice from Him whom we had the most reason to dread—without whom we could never be kept in existence to endure the terrific effects of our own spiritual suicide, and with whom “all things are possible,” even our spiritual resurrection; and it says to us, even to us, who lie scattered, like the dry bones in the valley of Ezekiel’s vision, Ye can live; “in me is thine help.”

Such, then, is the startling character of our text! Whom of us, if we remain what we are, “by nature,” “children of wrath,” will it not distress in view of what it shows we are, alarm by what it threatens we may continue to be, and encourage by the hope which it sets before us?

We shall endeavor, then, to fasten upon your convictions the solemn truths which our text announces and involves, by considering, first, that *we are destroyed*; 2dly, that *we have destroyed ourselves*; 3dly, that *it is a bitter thing to be a spiritual suicide*; and, 4thly, that *there is help, effectual help, for even such desperate and self-abhorring outcasts, in God.*

First, then, *Every man in his natural state is destroyed.* This will appear if we ask, In what destruction consists? and then show that each of the particulars which it involves, is true of every fallen child of Adam. If a thing has lost its essential character; if

it no longer possesses the main property with which it was originally endued; if it cannot be used for the purpose for which it was intended, and can never attain its original ends; if neither its own recuperative energies, nor yet any created strength, can restore its original character and power—whatever else it may be, it is no longer its first self; “it is destroyed.” Thus, a ship which no longer floats, which has sprung a leak, and sunk amid breakers, from which it cannot be recovered either by the efforts of its own helpless crew, nor yet by the help of those who look upon the wreck with impotent pity, which it is impossible should ever again be navigated, or answer the purposes of trade—such a ship is “destroyed.”

Just so is it with the fallen soul. We were originally created in the likeness of God, in righteousness and true holiness. This image we have lost. Our affections are no longer holy and heavenly, but earthly and sensual. The ends and objects at which we aim, are not those which God has in view. No sympathy exists between God and us; no communion takes place between him and us. Instead of delighting to confide in him, and to make known our wants and requests with filial feelings, we prove our alienation by avoiding his presence, and by restraining prayer before him. Indeed, if prayer ever be attempted in our natural state, it is generally a cold and irksome task, and never more than a temporary and self-deceiving enthusiasm. Unconverted men, through the blindness of their hearts, and the ignorance that is in them, may frequently make attempts of this kind to converse with God; and if the veil is ever taken from their

eyes, and they perceive the true character of the Most High, and the relations in which they stand to him—if ever under proper convictions of their sins, they endeavor to pray, they are no longer heartless and indifferent in the act: neither is such a service agreeable to the flesh; but they then feel as the Israelites did at the foot of Sinai, when God revealed himself in the terribleness of his holiness and justice. They quake and tremble, and are filled with the most dreadful apprehensions of the majesty and wrath of God. They then find by experience, that they are under condemnation, and that they deserve to be so; because they are filled with iniquity, at which God cannot justly look. Neither do any efforts of their own rid them of the disqualification to commune with God, under which they labor. Though they wash themselves with nitre, and take them much soap, yet is their iniquity marked before God; and when the Ethiopian changes his skin, and the leopard his spots, then may they be authorized in the hope of doing well, who have learnt to do evil. So utterly have they lost their original character, and failed in the purpose for which they were first created. They no longer enjoy communion with God; they no longer live to his glory; and fruitless are their efforts to elevate themselves to this exalted privilege and aim from which they have fallen. They are the most deplorable spiritual wrecks—so perverted and debased that, for the most part, they are not even aware of the uses and ends for which they were originally designed; and, while engaged in the grovelling pursuits of flesh and sense, vainly imagine that they are fulfilling the purposes for which they were made—like ships which

have been long since driven high and dry upon the beach, buried in the sand, and which, with their precious freight, have decayed, and lost nearly every trace of what they once were.

Such, then, are fallen men by nature: they are lost to fellow-creatures, to themselves, and to God; lost to all the uses and ends and joys for which they were designed; lost to the sense and shame of their own ruin; lost beyond all natural prospect and power of recovery. "Without hope, and without God," they grope on in blind unconsciousness of their state, through this world, until the veil be taken away, and they lift up their eyes in hell, under the full torments of that *destruction*, of which, if their consciences had not been seared as with a red-hot iron, and they had not been incapable of spiritual feeling, they could never have been unaware.

Oh! fallen and yet unconverted fellow-man, God assures thee in the text, thou art "destroyed;" but the arrow from the Almighty's quiver penetrates still deeper; it cannot be extracted; for it is barbed when he adds, "Thou hast destroyed thyself."

This brings us to our second point, which is—*Our destruction we have brought upon ourselves.*

Does not nature itself teach us this startling truth? What crime committed by a fellow-man against us, or against society, or against God, have we ever been ready to excuse upon the ground, that the agent could not be justly held responsible? Are we not measured, too, by others in the same way that we measure them? It is true, that we may frequently endeavor to avoid the consequences of our crime, by denying our com-

mission of it, or by pleading the provocation which we suffered, or the extenuation of other circumstances; but such an effort undeniably enhances our guilt in the sight of the All-seeing eye, and proves both the utter destruction of our originally holy characters, and our own agency in bringing and riveting that destruction upon ourselves. For the subsequent attempts at deception only add to the guilt of the first crime, and develop the incorrigible character of our fallen natures; they show us more clearly to be "vessels of wrath fit only for destruction." This same guilty self-love no doubt frequently leads many to endeavor to shield themselves from the reproaches of conscience and the affliction of self-abhorrence, by perverting the light which revelation has shed upon the introduction of evil into the world, and the radical character of our corruption, with no other purpose than to disclose the depth of our guilt, and the utter hopelessness of our case in ourselves. They thus persuade themselves that the blame of sin can only justly attach to Adam, and that we are not culpable for only following and gratifying the inclinations, however fallen, which we find in the natures with which we are born. They thus succeed, to their own satisfaction, in convincing themselves, that they have not destroyed themselves, but that their first father hath done it. Nor are they slow to infer hence, either that they shall hereafter escape with impunity, since they cannot be justly held responsible for another's act; or else that, if punished, they will be the victims of oppression.

Thus, one part of God's revelation, which was made only to show, by its very origin, the radical, and total,

and universal character of man's guilt and corruption, is so perverted as to obscure, or to convict of falsehood and injustice; other parts in which we are charged with sin and threatened with the curse. But who is there, that ever came under the influences of God's Spirit (all of whose operations are in perfect consistency with truth and justice,) that did not feel his own ill-desert—nay, his liability, in all equity, to the everlasting pains of hell? Who is there, under such teaching, that has not perceived the graciously just ordering of all the circumstances under which our nature was originally tried? who, while thus impressed, has ever dared to flatter himself that he would have acted otherwise than Adam did? who could refuse then to see that the nature of which he is a branch, became at that time corrupt and ill-deserving in its root? who, under such convictions, has ever hesitated to admit, that he, with all his fellow-men, then destroyed himself; and that every act of iniquity which has been since committed in the world, is only a consistent following out of that sin, by which our nature extinguished its own light, and holiness, and joy, alienated itself from God, and came under his irrevocable curse?

Oh! whether we contemplate any one of those thousand sins by which we have endorsed the act of our first father in the garden and made his guilt our own; or whether we look at that great trial of our nature itself, under all its attending circumstances and consequences, we cannot justly deny the charge which God brings against each of us in the text: "thou hast destroyed thyself;" thou art a spiritual suicide; thou

hast put out my life in thy soul; thou hast recklessly plunged into that fallen state in which thou wert born and hast lived. If the character in which I created thee is lost; if the exalted end for which I designed thee is exchanged for one that is groveling, sensual and selfish; if the noble powers with which thou wert originally endued are broken; if there be no natural prospect, or possibility, of thy recovery, the guilt lieth at thine own door; in every evil that thou encounterest in this world, and when thou liest down in hell, remember, it is thou hast done it, "thou hast destroyed thyself." Would, that each of you, my unconverted hearers, could be brought to feel, in heart and mind, the truth of the charge which God thus makes! and oh! that you might then see, though never feel, in all its terribleness, what was mentioned as our third head, that, *It is an evil thing and a bitter to be a spiritual suicide.*

We are so constituted, beloved friends, that the least evil which we bring upon ourselves is harder to bear by some natures, than the greatest which others can inflict upon us without cause. Thus, any breach, through ignorance or neglect, of a trifling law of mere conventional etiquette, has been known to affect some persons more deeply and for a longer time, than the greatest insults which others could heap upon them. And if our temporal prospects should be seriously injured by our own agency, the affliction is a hundred fold heavier than if it had been brought upon us by another hand. Oh! who can fathom the terrible consciousness of many a convicted murderer, when he realizes that it is for his own act he is about to endure

all the suffering, and ignominy, and consequences of the last penalty of the law? Now, this principle has an incalculably fearful force in spiritual things. Blind carnal men may be far from appreciating its power in this respect. They may conceive that the evil which they are treasuring up for themselves by impenitence and unbelief, is so light that they are ready to encounter it, as the price of acquiring that portion in this life which they desire, and that they can easily endure the thought of having brought it on themselves. As the Jews cried out concerning our Lord, when they sought his death, "His blood be on us and on our children;" so they may be prepared to brave God's warnings and threatenings in his word; but when the impending wrath descends, they will be overwhelmed. Even in this world, convicted sinners have cried out: "Our punishment is greater than we can bear," "Our iniquities have taken hold upon us; they are more than the hairs of our head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for us, we are unable to look up." In what a terrible light do they then view their past recklessness in the pursuits and pleasures of sin! At what price would they not be willing to obliterate their own agency in crime, and in calling down upon themselves that wrath of God, a sense of which is now awakened in their souls! All else would be easy to endure; but the thought, that they have destroyed themselves is more than they can bear. In the hour of death, too, as the departing spirit unreconciled and unforgiven, sometimes realizes its condition, and anticipates its woes, how does it look back upon its own career of impenitence, its scornful neglect of the offers

of mercy, until now it cannot shake off the awful conviction, that its day of grace is spent! As we follow the soul of the deceased to the bar of Christ, who can conceive the conscious despair with which it hears the sentence, "Depart from me, thou cursed, into everlasting fire!"—who imagine the remorse which it experiences in the thought, that this doom is well-merited, that it was brought by itself upon itself? As this spiritual suicide turns away from the King who sits upon the judgment-seat; as he makes his way to his own place through the parted ranks of those holy and blessed ones who stand around, how will he be able to encounter the look of those who regard him as one that has laid violent hands upon his own immortal soul!—who say with their eyes, if not with their tongues, "Thou hast destroyed thyself!" When he actually lies down in hell, and views it as his eternal home; when he suffers throughout endless ages, the gnawings of "the worm that dieth not, and of the fire that is not quenched," how will he be able to endure his own presence, when, without the possibility of doubt or contradiction, he lays at his own door the charge: "Thou hast destroyed thyself!"

Such would be the awful beginning of the eternal experience of every unconverted man in this house, if the One with whom he has to do should only bid him now to exchange worlds! He needs not anew to lift up his hand against himself and to murder his own soul, ere the eternal consciousness of spiritual suicide should be awakened in his breast; for this he has already done; he has already destroyed himself; he has cut himself off from all that is blessed in heaven

and in God; he has brought down upon himself the unwilling, but just and necessary curse of his offended God; his full experience of the destruction in which he has involved himself depends entirely upon the will of Him, whose wrath he has provoked, and who is every way worthy of his love. But ere God lift his hand and swear, "Thou shalt never enter into my rest," he addresses you, beloved, at least once more, in those precious words of encouraging love which are found in our text: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help!"

And this brings us to our last head. *There is help, effectual help, for even such desperate and self-abhorring outcasts as ourselves, in God.*

God would not otherwise assure us of the fact. He never excites a hope, which he is not able and ready to fulfill. Our case may appear to us desperate in the extreme, and so far as our own, or creature, deliverance is concerned, it may indeed be hopeless. The guilt which we have incurred by sinning against the Almighty may seem to us unpardonable, and it may in truth be immeasurable. Our original characters may, in our estimation, be irrecoverably ruined; our own spiritual powers may, by our painful experience, be proved to be broken; all possibility of attaining, through ourselves or by creature assistance, those glorious ends for which we were designed, may be lost; or we may have destroyed ourselves; and although we may acknowledge it is in the compass of divine power and wisdom to devise and effect our salvation, yet our suicidal souls are slow to hope, that He, under whose just condemnation we lie, will actually

ransom us from the dominion of death and hell; yet he addresses each of us in these encouraging words: "in me is thine help."

Nay, God fully discloses, in other parts of his word, the just grounds and effectual character of that redemption which he has provided for our suicidal souls. Upon his well beloved Son, he has laid the guilt of that whole course of sin, which in its beginning cut us off from God, and which in its continuance has confirmed our total alienation from the original Father of our spirits. Through his Spirit, purchased for the purpose by the blood of Christ, he is prepared with an almighty power to restore that image of himself in which we were originally created, and to crown us with a glory and blessedness above that which our first father lost. "Look unto me," says that Saviour whom God hath sent into this self-ruined world, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life." Does any despairing and self-ruined soul, brought to the foot of Jesus' cross, ask, "What must I do to be saved?" "Is salvation possible in my case?" To him Jesus in his word replies, "Only believe; all things are possible to him that believeth;" and as an instance of the all-inclusive character of Christ's redemption, and of the power of faith to save, let me close by relating a case, of which perhaps many of you have heard, but by following in the steps of which the most guilty and despairing self-destroyer may be saved: Such, then, are the facts—

“Mr. Whitefield, a brother of the Rev. George Whitefield, after living some time in a backsliding and careless state, was roused to a perception of his danger, but shortly after sunk into melancholy and despondency. He was drinking tea with the Countess of Huntingdon one afternoon, while her ladyship was endeavoring to raise his hopes by conversing on the infinite mercy of God through Jesus Christ. For a while it was all in vain. ‘My Lady,’ he replied, ‘I know what you say is true. The mercy of God is infinite. I see it clearly. But ah! my Lady, there is no mercy for me. I am a wretch, entirely lost.’ ‘I am glad to hear it, Mr. W.,’ said Lady H., ‘I am glad at my heart that you are a lost man.’ He looked with great surprise. ‘What! my Lady, glad! glad at your heart that I am a lost man!’ ‘Yes, Mr. Whitefield, truly glad: for Jesus Christ came into the world to save the lost!’ He laid down his cup of tea on the table.—‘Blessed be God for that,’ he said. ‘Glory to God for that word!’ he exclaimed. ‘Oh! what unusual power is this which I feel attending it! Jesus Christ came to save the lost! then I have a ray of hope;’ and so he proceeded. As he finished his last cup of tea, his hand trembled, and he complained of illness. He went out of the house for air, staggered, was brought in, and shortly after expired.”

My unconverted friend, He who plucked this soul in the eleventh hour as a brand from the burning, may prove, too, in your case, that He came to seek and to save that which is lost. Look up to the Author of faith; and he may give you the power to appropriate to yourself the gracious message in the text: “Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help.”

## SERMON XXV.

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### A DAYSMAN NEEDED.

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Job ix. 30, 33.

“IF I WASH MYSELF WITH SNOW WATER, AND MAKE MY HANDS NEVER SO CLEAN; YET SHALT THOU PLUNGE ME IN THE DITCH, AND MINE OWN CLOTHES SHALL ABHOR ME. FOR HE IS NOT A MAN, AS I AM, THAT I SHOULD ANSWER HIM, AND WE SHOULD COME TOGETHER IN JUDGMENT. NEITHER IS THERE ANY DAYSMAN BETWIXT US, THAT MIGHT LAY HIS HAND UPON US BOTH.”

THE expression of these sentiments was wrung from Job in one of those despairing moods, into which the adverse providences of God, the condemnation of our fellow-men, and the temptations of the devil, when combined, often cast the believer; and which those only, who are experienced in these depths, know how to appreciate. In them the enlightened Christian takes such spiritual and Scriptural views of his own ill-desert and of God's justice, that the superficial are startled, and the self-righteous revolt; while, at the same time, the free mercy of his God in Christ is so hidden, that he is filled with wretchedness and gloom. Whatever the desponding child of God, therefore, teaches concerning the law may be founded on revelation and experience, and be true; but his perceptions of the Gospel will be necessarily obscure and

false. Were it otherwise, we could scarcely conceive of such straits as Job's, in which he says: "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me."

We are now furnished with the key of the passage before us. The text is a faithful expounder of God's law; it is, however, a faithless denier of Christ's gospel. It was recorded by the Holy Ghost, as an instance of the blindness and the despair, which, in affliction, sometimes overtake the believer.

Look now at the immediate occasion of Job's using the striking figurative language before us. His two friends, Eliphaz and Bildad, had been maintaining the doctrine, that the providential dealings of God with men were regulated by the principles of impartial and inflexible justice—that the upright were always prospered, and the wicked invariably punished, and hence that a well-known divine attribute and practice proved, that the dreadful treatments and disease of Job were inflicted in consequence of his heinous sinfulness and hypocrisy, and because he was guilty before God's bar. In the course of their argument, one of them had asked: "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" and the other inquired: "Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?" Our whole chapter is a most logical refutation by the afflicted patriarch of this stern and false theory of his censorious friends. He begins his reply with the admission: "I know it is so of a truth," as you say, God's justice cannot be impeached; but then, upon your principles, it is im-

possible for any fallen creature to be on peaceful terms with him who cannot look upon iniquity. If God be strict to mark iniquity, and if he show no mercy, "how should any man be just with God?" "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" and if God "will contend with man, man cannot answer him one of a thousand." I maintain, therefore, there must be some other mode of being justified before God, than that legal way upon which you insist; and hence, I will not admit that all my past hopes of having peace and acceptance with God have been hypocritical and unfounded.

It was in pursuance of this same train of thought, that Job uttered the words of our text: "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. For he is not a man as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." It thus appears, that while Job triumphantly vindicates himself from the false assumptions of his carnal and self-righteous friends, by duly magnifying the holiness and justice of God,—he, yet, by having no insight, at this stage of his trial, into the provisions of Gospel grace, by not perceiving the foundations on which God's mercy rests, involves all men in a common and inevitable ruin, and plunges himself into the depths of wretchedness and despair. Examine now the terms in which this afflicted saint declares his just and hopeless condemnation. Can anything, brethren, be more expressive than Job's style of conveying his momen-

tous spiritual conceptions in our text? Without any preparatory note, relying simply upon the intelligible force of the question which he asks, to explain his meaning, he brings his soul before us in a bodily shape. How evidently strong are the desires of that soul to make itself meet to appear before the presence of God! how obviously deep are its convictions of the necessity of resorting to the best possible means of washing out every spot, or stain, or thing which can offend; how earnest are its efforts in their use. In attempting to accomplish this purpose, Job's soul, you perceive in the text, despises the clearest stream that ever coursed through a crystal bed—those waters are too turbid for the bath which it desires. Nay, the fountain itself, from which these spring, will not answer the end: for, in the estimation of his soul, no earthly laver can render a creature fit to appear before the eyes of the King of heaven. Only in that which comes from heaven itself, and which in purity may be supposed to vie with the robes of those who walk in white with God, does the soul of our patriarch think of making itself ready for examination, or of hoping for reception, by its God. It exclaims: "If I wash myself in snow water"—which, as it lies in a bright day on the face of the earth, is of unmixed and dazzling white—suffering not the penetration of a single ray—turning every other creature dim—and by comparison, almost making light itself of a dingy hue.—"If I wash myself in snow water," may I hope, he inquires, for acceptance with my God? Nor, we must remark, did Job's soul propose to make this most purifying of all earthly baths either hurried or slight. There the patriarch gives us

to understand, in our text, that his soul would persist in laving itself, until it was not only without spot; but until, *to all human appearance*, it could vie in whiteness with the very element in which it had been immersed; until it seemed as pure as snow itself: especially, he informs us, would it strive to cleanse its hands—the agents through which it had held communication with the world, and in which, if anywhere, evil might be thought to dwell, and to be exposed to detection. The effect of all, we are told, would be, that it would make its “hands never so clean.”

Now, what does all this figurative language mean? Surely it requires no extraordinary insight to perceive the meaning of this holy man of old. He reasons on the presumption, that, in his desires and efforts to obey and please God, he had aimed at no creature standard, he had been guided by no human rules; neither the philosophy of man, nor the customs and opinions of society, nor even the dictates of his own conscience had been recognized as law. These had been regarded as fallen and under the curse, and he had intuitively shrunk from attempting to commend himself to God by conforming to any of them. But what, if he had resorted to waters infinitely purer than any which originated on earth—what if he had had recourse to the very statutes of God, which, like driven snow, had descended from heaven, and are as pure as the place from which they emanated; what, if he had spent his entire life in the endeavor to become acquainted with their meaning and to follow their directions; what, if he had so far succeeded in his aims, that fallen creatures could detect no flaw in

his title to eternal life, but he had fairly won the plaudits of his fellow-men, and stood acquitted at the bar of his own conscience; what, if his name, by universal concession, stood at the head of the saintly calendar, and in his last hours, his friends should gather round his bed, reciting his good deeds, and cheering his departing spirit with the prospect of its abundant welcome and reward from God,—what, if all this had been done and reached, would he merit and receive a blessing from the hands of Him with whom he had to do, when he no longer, as heretofore, heard of Him with the hearing of the ear, but saw Him with his eye?—Hear now the reply of our enlightened patriarch to this momentous question. “Yet,” saith Job, notwithstanding all these, my efforts and attainments, “shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.” Could the utter insufficiency of all human righteousness be more strongly illustrated? After such honest efforts by a soul to commend itself to God, as could only be represented by its refusing to wash in anything short of snow water; after it had attained such purity that it could be said, “natural hands were never so clean”—yet when it came to stand in the presence of God, it was adjudged to have just come out of the ditch, covered with mire and filth—its very contact being regarded as so contaminating, that all things, animate and inanimate, shrunk from its approach; its very clothes abhorring it, and refusing to cover such a mass of pollution and deformity.

But may we not, brethren, suppose, that Job was here viewing man’s character and powers with the

jaundiced eye of an afflicted soured spirit; that his statement is ultra and fanatical, and by no means in consistence with the teachings of God's word? Hear, then, the doctrine on this point, which proceeded from the mouth of God himself: "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God."

Our Saviour's well-known case of the Pharisee, moreover, plainly shows how utterly impossible it is for any man to attain, by anything within his reach, justification before God. Except, indeed, he assures us, our righteousness exceed all this, we shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. The very profession of merit, the very entertainment of such a hope on the part of fallen man, according to our patriarch, proves, of itself, his utter ill-desert: "If I justify myself," says Job, "mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse."

Do any now, with indignation, exclaim, "Then are mankind in an evil case—if by nothing they can do, not even by their most strenuous efforts to follow the divine law itself, they can gain the favor and acceptance of God. Are we required, do such ask, to receive this with an implicit faith? or is any reason assigned for such an extraordinary economy in spiritual things?"

Hear, now, our text, in continuance:—This is so, saith Job; "for he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment." We are here taught why it is that any other creed is ever held by a single child of Adam. Unless God be looked

upon as a man like ourselves—unless he be degraded by us to a level with ourselves, it is utterly impossible for us, in any of our thoughts or deeds, to conceive that we shall merit his approbation, or that, if he should condescend to meet with us before another's judgment-seat, we could successfully plead against the charges he might bring. Oh! if we had exalted scriptural views of the infinite majesty of God's nature—if we knew that it was impossible to find out the Almighty unto perfection, and to understand the extent and character of his claims in and over us, we would conclude with Job, in our chapter: "Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul;" that is, though I thought myself without sin, yet I would still be in doubt until I had passed through his scrutiny, and had heard my acquittal from his mouth.

This would indeed be the case with himself, our patriarch implies, even though he had kept his original estate—though he had never fallen. He tells us, that if God had brought in a bill against him, although he were like Adam in paradise, he would file no "answer," because "God is not a man, as I am." Mark, he says not, God is not *such* a man—that is, a fallen man—as I am; but he is not a man, as I am; that is, he has not a human, a created nature. Impossible is it for any "potsherd of the earth" to be brought before a bar with his Maker, and thus to "come together in judgment." If, then, an unfallen man might well tremble at the thoughts of God's bar, much more did it become one who was born under the curse of ignorance and sin, to be dumb with silence when God spake; to lay his hand upon his mouth, and his mouth

in the dust, when he to whose eye all things are open and naked, accused him of short-coming. Nay, it behooved this son, who was made in the likeness of a fallen father, if he had learnt the most elementary spiritual truth, to feel satisfied that "none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean;" and therefore, even before God's sentence should be heard, to dismiss any hope of acceptance in himself, and to eschew a trial in his own name.

Oh! to what a state of absolutely iniquitous impotence is God degraded, when a fallen man, by his faith and hopes, implies that the one with whom he has to do is such a one as himself; that is, when, through his own efforts and acquirements, or because he has gained the approval of his own judgment, he looks forward to the acquittal and reward of his God. He thus, in effect, ascribes to the Almighty not only the infirmities of a creature, but all the blindness and sinful affection to which, in consequence of the fall, he is himself subject!

If, therefore, any man hope for justification, because he has made any attempt to cleanse his soul, and has washed himself in snow-water—that is, attempted to keep the divine law—the very expectation proves that he has robbed God of some of his blessed attributes, and his own mouth condemns him. If, according to such a one, God be holy and just, be penetrating and wise, then that judgment of God in which these infinite attributes are to be exercised, must of necessity agree with the conclusion at which he himself had arrived, either in setting up a standard of duty for himself, or in interpreting that standard

which had been supplied him from heaven, or in forming an opinion of the extent and value of his own obedience. Job, we have seen, repudiated every such confidence; he was bereft of all hope in himself. But was our afflicted patriarch not able to derive an expectation of deliverance from any other quarter? In his present faithless and distressed condition, none, none whatever. For, after having renounced every thought of braving the scrutiny of God, he continues, in despair, to say: "Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." Either Job had here wholly lost sight of Christ, or he did not, at this moment, feel any personal interest in Christ's mediation and intercession. It is true that, at other times, this afflicted child of God saw this matter in a different light; recognizing the possibility, if not the actual existence of such a Mediator, and praying for a personal interest in his atonement.

Elsewhere he makes these supplications: "Oh! that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbor!" And again: "Put me in a surety with thee." All, too, remember the remarkable confidence with which he declared, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." But here, in our text, he would seem to have been given up to all the gloom of unbelief. "Neither is there," he declares, "any daysman betwixt us." What is meant by "daysman?" There is none, he means, who has been appointed to settle the controversy between God and me on a particular *day*; or who, by a certain *day*, is expected to bring it to an amicable adjustment. There is no arbitrator, no umpire, no mediator, no referee, who has either power

or authority, in the striking figurative language of our patriarch, to stretch out his hands, laying one on God, and one on me—preventing violence, until he satisfy us both, and reconcile us to each other.

Our whole text, then, amounts to this:—It is, as though this eminent child of God, overwhelmed with the severe and multiplied afflictions with which he had been providentially overtaken, had lost all sense of his personal interest in the covenant of grace, and had set out to search anew for a foundation upon which to base his hope. After critically and minutely examining his own holiness and claims, he unequivocally acknowledges their utter worthlessness; nay, their positive ill-desert. He then turns his eye upward towards God; but, at once, he shrinks back in terror at the sight of his majesty and justice, and owns that he there met with only “consuming fire.”

We have thus far followed the patriarch in his earnest search for a saving hope. We have reached with him the scriptural conclusion, that there was no ground, either in himself or God, to expect salvation or escape. We have seen him, at this point, turning away both from himself and God—looking up to heaven and around the earth—searching the wide universe for one able and disposed to adjudicate between himself and God; for one competent to satisfy the violated claims of the Most High upon his guilty soul. The discovery of such a one, we clearly perceive, is desperately needed in his case; it is with him either life or death. All would be relieved to hear the announcement that a Saviour had been found; but the patriarch’s mind the god of this world had here

been permitted to blind, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto him. In his wretchedness he assures us, as the conclusion of the whole, "Neither is there any daysman." We can almost see him in despair shut his eyes and clasp his hands; realizing his worst fears, and assured that he is accounted an outcast—his present sufferings being a token of God's wrath, and a foretaste of the perdition that awaits his soul.

Our text addresses itself to two classes in our midst. First, it teaches you, fellow-disciples, that, *in every severe and deep trial of your souls, the sight of Jesus, faith in the provisions of that better covenant of which he is the mediator, is your only solace and support.* We are subject to these trials in the courts of our own consciences, at any hour. God may put us upon them in seasons even of worldly prosperity. It needs only the withdrawal of his comforting Spirit, and a commission given to the accuser, to bereave us of our well-founded hopes. No scriptural claim can ever be discerned in ourselves; nor will any ray of mercy reach us from God, as the giver of the law; for, by its "deeds, no flesh shall be justified." If, then, we look not to Jesus, even in the midst of earthly plenty, we shall suffer spiritual death; our very blessings will be converted into curses, and thought to be sent by God as the means of fattening us for the slaughter. Without a sense of Christ's saving presence, many a believer has walked through the very tokens of God's mercy, with all the gloomy apprehensions of an heir of wrath.

But, especially in periods of affliction, such as Job's,

is the disciple's soul often put upon sore trials of this kind. Then, all of God that can be seen and felt, assumes an angry shape and look. His providence has cut off the desire of our eyes, and laid our bodies on a bed of pain. In the meanwhile, his consolations with us are small; if, indeed, he have not withdrawn all sense of his favor and love. Mistaken earthly friends, like Job's, either cruelly forsake, or unjustly suspect. Nor, as the climax of our sufferings, are we free from the fiery darts of the wicked. Whither, in such an urgent case, shall we look for hope or help? Neither God nor his word cut us off from the privilege of seeking his face with fasting and with prayer. But how prone are we, under such comfortless circumstances, to trust in that which sense finds near at hand—instead of using these means of grace to reach after Christ, that we may rely on him as our only righteousness and plea; to depend upon those means of grace themselves, as meritorious denials of the flesh! instead of seeking by them to find that fountain which was opened in Jesus' side, for sin and for uncleanness; to wash in them as snow-water, and to make our hands never so clean.

Oh! can the scriptural mind wonder that every ablution of the kind proves with God to be like wallowing in a ditch? and that, in despair, we learn that God is not a man, as we are, that we should answer him, and come together in judgment? What we, after such an experience, feel ourselves to want, is a sight of that daysman to whom all power and judgment have been committed between the Father and ourselves. Wretched, indeed, is our condition, if we

cannot then discover him whom our souls desire and need.

Oh! then, brethren, let us by faith always keep the daysman betwixt God and us in view. In every time of trial and distress, let us see in his hand that all-sufficient covenant, which assures us that our sins are freely forgiven through his blood—that God is our God, though he give us plenteousness of tears to drink—that we are loved, though we be chastened, and that all things shall work together for good to them who love God, and who are the called, according to his purpose.

Finally, our subject addresses itself to those *who have no plea or hope in Christ*. Many of you, my friends, would no doubt be perplexed, if honestly asked, Upon what do you habitually depend to commend you to God, and to secure the salvation of your souls? Shame, after a moment's reflection, might provide you with some answer; but its different parts would probably be inconsistent with each other, and conscience would inwardly own, that the reply was given that you might not appear so inconsiderate as to be wholly negligent in this momentous matter. If the truth were owned to yourselves and others, it would be evident that you have on this subject no reliance whatever; that you are not even in the daily observance of any set of laws or rules, upon which you trust for acquittal at God's bar; that you follow the stream in society, or the current of temptations and lusts, with no reference to that to which they tend in the eternal world; that you are guilty of many notorious transgressions, so that if you should appear before

God, he might say of your guilt, as he did in the case of some of old: "I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these." Need we say that Job's example teaches, that a daysman is needed between you and Him who cannot look upon iniquity?

There are some, again, who profess to be philosophers, and to be guided by reason in their entire course; some, who compare themselves with their fellow-men, and who are satisfied with the morals and customs of the circle in which they move; some, who claim to follow the dictates of their conscience, and not to be aware that in anything they heinously offend. These, though unlike each other, all labor under the same radical defect. Does not the declaration of our text, (the evident truth,) that God is not a man, that you should answer him—alarm your souls lest your creature intellects should not be able to fathom the Almighty, and to decide what his claims and majesty require of you? Have you no suspicion that this may be, as the Bible declares it, a fallen and corrupt state, and that these earthly streams are too muddy so to wash one, that he can appear before him in whose eyes the heavens are not clean?

Surely, all philosophers, and worldlings, and moralists need Jesus, the incarnate God, as a daysman betwixt them and him, who has said: "My ways are not your ways, neither are my thoughts your thoughts; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

But, in conclusion, there may be some who have

ascended much higher than these earthly spirits; who have been content with washing in nothing short of the snow-water of God's law, which is as clean and pure as God himself from which it came; some, whose efforts to purify themselves have been so honest and persevering, that, as touching the law, they are conscientiously blameless, or at least excusable. Judged by their own and man's judgment, their hands may be never so clean, yet are they not thereby justified; for he who judgeth them is the Lord; and when they appear before the bar of the All-seeing One, our text forewarns them, "He will plunge them in the ditch, and their own clothes shall abhor them;" all nature will stand aghast at their turpitude and guilt.

Oh! why is this? It is because God is not a man, as is every such an one. He is not a fallen carnal creature, who discerneth not spiritual things—whose mind is enmity against His own blessed perfect nature. He will put such an interpretation upon his claims over the human soul, upon the requirements of his own law, as never entered into the heart of an unenlightened child of Adam to conceive; and the most confident will at once be covered with shame and confusion of face.

Let all, then, who justify themselves, be now convinced that they are condemned by their own mouth. Let them be reprov'd of sin by the Comforter whom Jesus sends. Let every human and every legal confidence and stay be renounced. Let that daysman, who has already one of his hands on God—rendering him forbearing and long-suffering—lay the other upon you, and bring you, and Him with whom you have to

do, together, into a close and lasting league of peace—  
a covenant, sealed with the Daysman's own blood—  
providing against all your ignorance, infirmity, and  
ill-desert, and ordered in all things and sure.



## SERMON XXVI.

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EVIL IN RESERVE FOR THE SELF-WILLED; OR, PRESENT  
GRACE THE ONLY PLEDGE OF FUTURE GRACE.

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Jeremiah xii. 5.

“IF THOU HAST RUN WITH THE FOOTMEN, AND THEY HAVE WEARIED  
THEE, THEN HOW CANST THOU CONTEND WITH HORSES? AND IF, IN  
THE LAND OF PEACE, WHEREIN THOU TRUSTEDST, THEY WEARIED  
THEE, THEN HOW WILT THOU DO IN THE SWELLING OF JORDAN?”

THIS is figurative language, and intended to teach an important spiritual truth. *How striking and graphic*, however, *is the imagery under which the lesson is conveyed!* In abrupt, but well-drawn outline, it first brings before us a solitary and wretched fugitive, endeavoring to escape from a host of deadly enemies in hot pursuit. He is almost spent by the exertions which he is making for his life, and is ready to faint and yield. Ere long, however, the hostile party appear on the field in greater numbers and better equipped; they are mounted on fleet and warlike chargers, and it seems quite evident that the pursuers will soon overtake their prey. Indeed, so obviously is he losing ground, so exhausted is his strength, and so hopeless is his case, that the miserable man is in our text discouraged from all further effort. He is asked, and the question assigns a reason for his yielding at once,

“If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?”

The Spirit of Inspiration, however, bent on impressing the party addressed with a sense of utter despondency, is not content with the use of a single figure, but varies the scene, and enforces the same lesson by imagery still more striking and terrible. We are next led, in the sketch drawn by the divine pen, to see a neat and flourishing residence, on the banks of a quiet stream. There is apparently everything to make its occupant satisfied and happy. He seems, indeed, himself to have been aware that there were many things in his situation that were desirable. He particularly congratulated himself that the land was free from invasion; and he was evidently endeavoring to turn every advantage to account. Still, he was far from being contented. He was not as prosperous as he desired to be; and his neighbors were not kind; nay, they were absolutely inclined to persecute.

On the whole, he spent a miserable life, and was fretful and murmuring. Suddenly, however, all these idle complaints were hushed. An inevitable and overpowering calamity arose. It was worse than the pursuit of armed horsemen; for they had human hearts, and might relent. But who can reason with the overflowing surge? The river, on the banks of which this grumbler lived, burst over its bounds; with terrific speed it swept before it all that had been gathered by the toil of years, and neither man nor beast were able to escape.

All this is vividly portrayed by the second question in our text: "And if, in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

But it is time for us now to ask, *With whom, and for what purpose, did the Spirit of God utter this appalling remonstrance?* It is his opening reply to Jeremiah; and it was addressed to him under the following circumstances. At an early age, Jeremiah had been called to the office of a prophet in his native Anathoth, a small village within a few miles of Jerusalem. His neighborhood, and indeed the whole generation of his countrymen, were characterized by remarkable ungodliness. In view of its wickedness, the punishment and desolation of the land had been determined upon in the divine counsels; and the exercise of our prophet's duties became, in consequence, anything but a pleasant task. His official intercourse with the people consisted of little else than mutual menaces—he denouncing them for their sins, and foretelling the calamities which impended; and they accusing him of imposture, and threatening him with punishment. The painful and perilous relations which our prophet thus sustained towards his neighbors, preyed upon his spirit; and he ventured, in our context, to address himself to the Almighty for an explanation of the mysterious and severe providences which he had to encounter. In his preface he makes the most respectful acknowledgment that all the divine ways were righteous; yet he asks for leave to talk with God, on familiar terms, respecting his judgments. He then inquires why it is, that the wicked people and the treacherous are happy? why

it is that they are so firmly established, and that they and their families flourish, notwithstanding their evident hypocrisy; while he, whom God knew, and whose heart had proved faithful under every trial, had to endure the evils of poverty and disgrace, and was exposed to deadly dangers? With inexcusable vindictiveness, Jeremiah then proceeds to call down judgments on the heads of his ungodly foes. The answer of God was intended to reprove the prophet for his present impatience and faithlessness, and to show him that providence had in reserve for him trials incalculably more severe. Could anything be better calculated to produce this effect, than the remonstrance in our text, with which the Almighty opens his reply? "If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

All acquainted with the subsequent history of our prophet, know that the calamities which befell him afterwards, when thought of in connection with the trials of which he complains in our chapter, were like the pursuit of horses in comparison with that of footmen; like the overflowing of Jordan, when contrasted with the common casualties of life. The inhabitants of the obscure village of Anathoth, though ungodly and inimical, were weak and placable foes, when compared with the leading and wily politicians of the metrop'is—the king and princes, and priests and false prophets in Jerusalem, to which Jeremiah, in common with all his countrymen, was soon driven by the in-

vading army of the Chaldeans. Like all the besieged, from whom every supply was cut off, he was reduced to the extremity of famine. But the threatenings against the rulers and people of Jerusalem, which a divine impulse required him to deliver, soon excited his wicked fellow-sufferers to madness; and after enduring much persecution and violence, he was thrown into a dark and wet dungeon, into the deep mire of which he sunk, and was there left with murderous unfeelingness apparently to suffer a frightful death. How despairing and bitter were the reproaches which the prophet uttered under these trying circumstances! "Cursed be the day," he cried, "wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad. Let that man be as the cities which the Lord overthrew, and repented not: because he slew me not from the womb." How incapable of contending with horses was he, who had been wearied by running with footmen! how unable to buffet with the overflowing flood of Jordan was he who had been wearied in the land of peace!

Such were the calamities which awaited Jeremiah, at the time when that interview with God took place, which is recorded in our chapter; and such were the despondency and blasphemies with which he met the afflictive providences, when they finally overtook him! Well, therefore, might God forewarn him of what was in reserve, and rebuke him for his inclination to faithlessness and murmuring under trials which were comparatively light, saying to him in the words of our

text: "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

With the light, brethren, which Scripture thus throws upon the meaning of God's remonstrance with Jeremiah in our text, we can scarcely be at a loss to draw from it the lesson which it was designed to teach. It is, that *there are more severe ordeals in reserve, for which we are wholly unprepared, if we faint under present trials.* There is scarcely any class of persons, moreover, to whom this lesson will not, in some form, apply. We all have trials of one kind or another, if not temporal, then spiritual, and more or less severe. Every heart knows its own bitterness; and there is no reflecting and serious person who will boast, that he is without his cross. At first sight, indeed, it may appear, that we have scarcely authority to include spiritual trials among those to which our text refers. But this exception will not be taken by any who know how intimately connected spiritual feelings are with temporal providences, and how speedily and completely the latter become merged in the former in the Christian's experience. Afflictions lose their character, and are no longer worthy of the name, when God's grace hedges us in, and does not allow temptations to approach and assail. It is a greater or less degree of faithlessness, which causes us to sorrow like those without hope; and when a covenant Father's hand is recognized in tribulations, we count it all joy as we fall into them. This is quite evident in the case of

all the holy men of old, and especially is it obvious in our prophet's history. It would, therefore, betray on our part much ignorance of the Scriptures, and a very superficial experience, if we did not include spiritual trials among those to which the lesson derived from our text applies.

We say, then, in the first place, that *we are unprepared to stand before the bar of Christ, if we know not how to meet the trials to which our souls are put in the present life.*

He must indeed have sunk from the level of a man to that of a beast, who has not to endure many severe trials of his soul. Past reasoning with, and callous to every appeal, must that heart be, which has not been subject to frequent painful experience, in view of its natural relations to God—cut off as it is by them from all peaceful access to, and all blessed communion with, its heavenly Father. How degraded, too, must that character be, who lives as if he were one of the beasts which perish; who brings not his soul to daily settlements with God—seeing how his spiritual accounts stand, and whether he is able to meet his Judge's face, when summoned to that last trial which has been appointed for all men after death. But who has even subjected himself to such a test, in his own name and strength, without shrinking from the conflict, and giving it up in despair? There is no one, who will not be afraid, and who will not cry out, "O wretched man that I am!" if he only consider. Fallen men, in the faculties of memory, and feeling, and conscience, are endued with powers, which, if properly exercised, are sufficient to institute an inquiry, that will result in

a verdict and sentence under which the stoutest will quail. In our past life, how many desires have we entertained, which were contrary to the purity and requirements and providences of the great Searcher of Hearts! The testimony, which every man's memory is able to give on this point, is enough to appal. At the same time, memory is sufficiently conscious of its own infirmities, to confess that it has forgotten much more than it has treasured up. While memory, too, is such a swift witness, in relation to wishes that have been positively wrong, it will not venture, when thoroughly awake and partially enlightened, to refer to a single desire of our heart in all the past, which it can hope will altogether endure the scrutiny of the re-trying God. Present feeling, moreover, is aware of much in our souls that is inconsistent with the nature and claims of God. No man, who is clothed in the robe of his own merits, justifies the law of God in the length and breadth, and heart-inspecting character of its requirements, nor in that uncompromising condemnation of his state and person, which it pronounces. Such is the miserable plight into which memory and feeling reduce us, as we stand before conscience, the representative in our souls of Him, in whose sight "the thought of foolishness is sin."

In the case of the very best and purest among us, memory will not have to confine itself, as a witness, to inward feelings; but many cases of outward conduct, too, it can testify have been either short-coming, or forbidden. Duties, which the divine law has enjoined, both towards God and towards our fellow-men, we have often either wholly neglected, or else imperfectly

performed! How frequently, also, have we been guilty of indulgences, which the same authority has proscribed, and which we would be ashamed to have laid to our charge in the society in which we move! Thus memory testifies, before God's vicegerent in our souls, that the marks of iniquity can be found without secret search, on our outward man, in our very tongues, and upon our hands. The verdict of guilty, is consequently rendered in the court of conscience against our souls; and when we attempt to flee before the sentence of condemnation which the judge pronounces, we find the effort to escape more than our strength is able to put forth. No endeavor to reform is successful; for if with such a vain intention we turn from conscience, we hear it pursuing us in loud tones with the inquiry, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" What future change in our characters and lives, too, can free us from the execution of that sentence which has been already justly pronounced upon us, in view of the past? We feel that we cannot escape. Conscience gains upon us in the race. We hear the thunders of its denunciations growing louder, as it approaches, crying, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." We every moment expect to feel its hand upon our shoulder, apprehending us, that we may be delivered to the tormentors. In despair we are about to yield; when every nerve is at once relaxed, and we are prostrated by the blow which is dealt us in the text: "If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of

peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

This is the voice of God, as he makes us sensible that we must stand before his bar; as he convinces us, that, if we be incapable of escaping the trial and judgment of his poor, weak representative in our souls, we shall never be able to endure the searching of his eye, when we see him face to face. Such a trial, when brought beside any that we have been able to hold in our souls, will be worse than the attempt to contend with horses, when we have been wearied in running with footmen. It will be more like an overflowing flood, when contrasted with the land of peace, in which we had been endeavoring to construct for ourselves a home and rest. The water will be searching; it will penetrate every pore, and fill every cavity. So we cannot flee from God's Spirit, nor escape by hiding in any recess of our being, from his presence. He will possess us behind and before, and lay his hand upon us.

In the prospect of such an interview with God, we feel, that in our despair, we shall vainly call upon the mountains and rocks to fall upon us, and hide us from his presence and wrath. Such will be the wretched condition in the trial of the great day, of all who know not how to plead in answer to every accusation which is brought, and every sentence which is pronounced in those courts which conscience holds in their own souls.

That you may escape, then, beloved, that sentence of condemnation, which will never be repealed, it is essential, that you be empowered to arrest the judgment, which conscience is ready to pronounce, when-

ever your natural guilt rises to view. You must be able to offer that plea which will silence conscience,—nay, require it, as the officer of God, to acquit and bless you. By faith, you must see all your iniquities meeting, and laid upon, the crucified Son of God. You must plead with heartfelt confidence the merits of his name. With humble hand you must clothe your naked soul with his righteous robe. Then, you will be able not only to run with the footmen, but to contend with the horses. You shall not only not be wearied in this land of peace, but you will be able to ride in triumph over a swelling Jordan. Yea, you will be at peace both with conscience and with God. You will not flee from either. You will be the friend of both. As one who is worthy, and clothed in white, you will walk with each, as two who are agreed.

But we proceed now, briefly in the second place, to say, that *if we fail under present temporal trials, then, if we be God's children, we may expect others, which are worse, and for which we are unprepared.*

How strikingly was this exemplified in the case of our prophet! What were the obscure residents of Anathoth as persecutors, when placed beside the king and his nobles? They were like footmen attempting to run with horses. What was Jeremiah's home in his quiet native village, when contrasted with the miry dungeon, that was in the court of the prison at Jerusalem? It was like the land of peace, when compared with the overflowing flood. What was the painful experience, which emboldened him to reason with God, in our context, when weighed in the balance with the despair which subsequently wrung from him

such dreadful blasphemies? Naming them together is almost like endeavoring to measure the sufferings of earth and men with those of hell and devils. Even so, beloved, does a faithful God deal with all his children, the brethren of the prophet, in every generation. Let it not be supposed that we question either the right or the power of the Almighty to sanctify and bless his people, by the simple agency of his Spirit, through his word, and without the use of any other means. But he has seen fit, in his wisdom, to adopt another method, as a general law. And when he has, in any particular case, commenced trying the faith of one of his sons or daughters, would it be consistent with his own character and glory, or with the good of the child, whose sanctification he designs, to draw back, because he meets with distrust and murmuring? Ah! no. With no feeling of anger, with no intention of punishing, but with simple covenant faithfulness and grace, his hand will be stretched out still. Nor will it be withdrawn, until his purpose of good towards the wayward object of his love is fully realized; until the blessed lesson of God's sovereignty be thoroughly learned; until soul and body, for time and for eternity, are committed into his hand, as into the hand of a faithful Creator, to be moulded according to his will. If the cup which he offers us be refused, we will still be required, even unwillingly, to drink its very dregs. Unless submission and thankfulness be then wrought in our souls, and exhibited in our feelings and lives, another, larger and more bitter, will be placed in our hands; and such will be his orderings until, with the same mind which was in

Christ Jesus, we say, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

Every afflictive dispensation of our heavenly Father's hand, then, under which we repine and murmur, we may rest assured, Christian brethren, is but the foreshadowing approach of another, which is darker, and greater, and heavier. Upon such occasions, we may, with our spiritual ears, hear him address our souls in the words of our text: "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if, in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

Such, in the main, will be the painful character of the intercourse between God and our souls, until, without any qualifications or reserves, respecting ourselves, or any loved person or thing, all our interests, personal and relative, are forever resigned into his hands; until we cast all our care upon him who careth for us, resolved in his strength to follow wherever he leads, assured that we shall know hereafter, though we know not now, what he does; until our habitual motto be, "Not our will, but thine be done; as in heaven, so on earth."

*Oh! how blessed is it to walk with God, when his will and ours are so thoroughly agreed!* The covenant into which we have entered with him is then felt to be ordered in all things and sure; and its execution is committed, without doubting or fear, into his hands. "All things," we are certified, "shall work together for our good." We fear no evil. Even the last enemy is stripped of his terrors. At

our Father's command we go forward; shrinking from nothing which he bids us do or endure; resolved with Job, that though he slay us, yet will we trust in him; nay, when he actually takes from us the life which he gave, we commend, with David, our spirits to his care; and declare, with Paul, that "we know him in whom we have believed, and that he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him, until that day."

But such freedom from care is not only blessed; but we would remind you in conclusion, Christian brethren, *what encouragement exists for you thus to trust God in all your present trials, and in all which are to come.*

What a broad and solid foundation, in the first place, has his grace laid, upon which you can build your plea in every court which conscience holds! Could his love grant, or your distrust require more? "He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." How all-sufficient! Let the boundless character of the Father's gift produce unqualified confidence in his intention. Let the infinite merits of the sacrifice dispel all fears of your acceptance, while pleading them with heartfelt reliance. Repeat so loudly and constantly in the ear of conscience the terms upon which you ground your plea, not only for acquittal, but for approval and blessing, that that blind, but faithful legal judge, will himself become persuaded of the equity of your claims, and freely justify you, though in yourself guilty and ungodly, because you believe in Jesus. But let your trust in Jesus be un-

mixed and exclusive; and your plea be that which springs from such a trust. Walk with conscience as one with whom you are agreed in Jesus Christ: as one, who has been enlightened by the word and Spirit, to teach you what will please the God who freely justifies you in his Son. But attempt not to keep pace in any manner or degree with conscience, as one whose dictates, if followed, will afford you some plea for peace with it, and the God whom it represents. Such an effort will be running with a footman who is swifter than yourself; and soon, horses will also appear, contending in the race. It will be dwelling in a land which will weary thee, even in the false peace which it holds out, but which is also subject to the swelling of Jordan. It will be bribing God's officer into a truce which his Master will break; and both the parties to which he will condemn and punish. In whatever duties you discharge, or graces you exhibit then, let conscience walk with you as one "having not your own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." "Be thus justified by faith; and you will have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," both in this world, and in that which is to come.

And, fellow-believer, while you thus make Christ your entire righteousness, why should you not also, in the next place, make him your entire strength? while you refuse to try your speed with conscience, why should you cross swords with the providences of God? why should you, with any servile dislike of God's orderings, be sullen, or cheerless under them?

why nerve yourself under them with stoical apathy, to endure what is regarded as a heavy imposition; and be tempted, ever and anon, in unguarded moments, to reason with, and murmur against God? If you can trust God with the greater, why not in the less? If you can commit to him your spiritual and eternal interests, why not those which relate to this fleeting world? Oh! tempt him not by any infidel reasonings respecting the mystery of his ways, to add to the duration or weight of your troubles; to rebuke you, like Jeremiah, in tones which are to be turned into overpowering realities: "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

Let not such be the hard character of your intercourse with God; but commit your way unto him, and he will bring your best desires to pass. Oh! is there not abundant ground for this implicit trust? "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for you, shall he not with him also freely give you all things?" Trust him then unreservedly with the present; and "let the morrow take care for the things of itself." Murmur not under any actual cross; "neither fear any evil-tidings, but have your heart fixed, and trusting in the Lord." Concerning the present, God will then say, "I am with thee;" concerning the future, he will promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." You will not stand in fear of having to contend with horses, or of being overflowed by Jordan; but your unshaken

conviction will be, that "as your day is, so your strength shall be;" that the everlasting God is one, who giveth power to the faint, and to them who have no might, he increaseth strength. For "even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."



## SERMON XXVII.

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### THE SINFULNESS OF SIN.

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Romans vii. 13.

“THAT SIN BY THE COMMANDMENT MIGHT BECOME EXCEEDING SINFUL.”

NONE acquainted with St. Paul's epistles, and the character of the subjects on which he treats, will for a moment accuse the apostle of having a meagre vocabulary; for he may well challenge comparison in this respect with any writer, inspired or profane; he is excelled by no author in the variety and aptness of his expressions. Neither will the believer consider it short of blasphemy to suppose, that the language of one, who spake and wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, is not the best adapted to convey his conceptions in the way which he prefers.

Thus much is said in order to defend the apostle from the charge of inelegance or impropriety, when, in the text, he describes his subject by an adjective derived from its own name. For St. Paul was not one of those fastidious writers who would sacrifice sense to sound. On the other hand, it is equally unauthorized in any, to regard him here as consulting force more than truth. God would not allow one of his organs to affect a strength which the reality would not justify.

When, therefore, we are told that sin is not vile, loathsome, evil, or any other thing which on account of its character and effects is detested and shunned, nor that it is thus in the greatest possible degree; but when we read that sin is "exceeding sinful," we may rest assured that there is no vicious and mischievous attribute which it does not possess in an infinite measure; that it comprises within itself all that is worthy of our denunciation or fear, that our conceptions of its hatefulness would be most shortcoming, if in a single view we should be satisfied with regarding, or by a comprehensive word be willing to describe, sin as anything else but "exceeding sinful." Only by itself can sin be rightly and fully characterized: sin, therefore, according to our apostle in the text, is "exceeding sinful." How few of us, my beloved hearers, realize the fact that we are by nature filled with, and characterized by, anything so frightful and odious; that if any unfallen and holy creature should attempt to denounce our race as altogether evil, he would simply depict us by a term which we are wont to acknowledge as justly applicable to ourselves, and which we admit with so little sense of shame; that he would merely say, "They are sinful!" Oh! how short-coming are the views of sin in this fallen world! Here, all are contaminated. None can charge another in this respect with that of which he is not guilty himself. The curse of ignorance, too, which is entailed upon sin, prevents the sinner from measuring the magnitude of the evil under which he and his fellow-men labor.

What of it he does perceive, moreover, it is his interest either to conceal or palliate, as a disease for

which he knows no remedy, and to the very existence of which he had therefore better be blinded. Thus with scarcely any compunction or feeling of degradation, it is all but universal for men to confess themselves guilty of sin. Oh! how differently would the matter be viewed in heaven, where all are duly impressed with the majesty, the perfection, and the claims of God! What profound and unalloyed reverence and affection sway the hearts and minds of angels and archangels and the spirits of the just, as they surround the throne, veil their faces, bow their heads, and cry, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are filled with thy glory!" If now, in those unspotted courts and amid that holy and elect host, it should be whispered, that there was one, who in the hidden recesses of his heart and in a single wish, was not loyal and true to Him whom all loved and served with every affection and power—whom all knew to be infinitely above their praise and to be humbling himself when he had the least respect to it, what wonder and incredulity would such a rumor at first excite! What horror would succeed, if the suspicion once gained a foothold in their breasts! What a burst of indignation and execration would be heard, as the accusation was proved and brought home to the person and conscience of the transgressor! Like the waves of the sea, would that countless host be agitated, while a single rebel was numbered in its ranks. There would be tumult in heaven until the traitor were ejected. Not only, too, would that glorious and countless number of God's holy subjects thus regard the sinner and his sin; but the king of

heaven himself would not be able to look upon iniquity, nor to endure the sinner in his sight. Ere, indeed, with their finite powers, and with that unsuspectingness which is the necessary characteristic of a perfect created nature, the angels would detect the presence of a sinner in their midst, God's omniscient eye would have perceived the lust in its very conception, and before it had time to bring forth, his just indignation would have been aroused and the guilty rebel would have been hurled from his seat of blessedness. "I saw Satan," said the Son of God, "fall like lightning from heaven." All that remained for those who retained their steadfastness, and who had been made acquainted with the existence of the sin by witnessing its punishment was to approve God's sentence and its execution, and to cry, "Just and holy are thy ways, O Lord God of hosts; who shall not praise thee, for thou only art holy!"

We perceive, then, how, in heaven, and by those who see things as they are, sin is viewed. There, and by its inhabitants, every descriptive epithet would be considered as almost guilty in its deficiency, except that which our apostle has adopted. Every heart is there swayed by that same spirit, under whose guidance Paul wrote; and the inhabitants of heaven would scarcely be content to portray sin in any other than its own colors—they would say of sin, in the words of our text, "It is exceeding sinful." Oh! that all of us might be able in some measure to weigh that of which we are guilty, and for which we shall have to give an account, in the same scales! that we might at least be as much reproved for its com-

mission, as the Holy Spirit reproves those whom he convinces of their spiritual necessity, and whom he is drawing to Jesus as their necessary Saviour! More than this we should not, perhaps, in our present weak state, be able to bear. For, if an unconverted, unforgiven soul should see sin with as clear and penetrating a vision as God beholds it, he could not endure the sight, dissolution would inevitably ensue, and the fire which it would enkindle would be hell begun.

But do any of you now ask, Is not this exaggerated? How is it possible that sin can justly be viewed in this light?

Attend then, to a brief reply to this question, and be led with the apostle to view sin as "exceeding sinful." We shall present the subject in only a single aspect. It shall be one, however, which to the truly convicted sinner is all-engrossing. For in him, apart from its relations to God, sin excites but little concern. Confining our attention, therefore, to this view of sin, we would say of it, first: *It is contrary to the nature of God.* God is essentially and unchangeably holy. Holiness in him is exactly the same in kind with what holiness is in the creature. It differs only in degree. In the creatures, it is love of God, but love to him limited by the extent of their capacities; in him it is love to himself, not only pure, but infinite in measure and depth. God is worthy of this illimitable self-love. What it would be sin in a creature to have for himself, it would be sin in God not to render to himself. God, therefore, loves himself immeasurably and unfathomably. This love for himself is what the Bible calls light; and it says that "God is light

and in him is no darkness at all." Until he ceases, then, to be what he has been from eternity, such will ever be the holy, that is, the self-loving nature of God.

Now, can any one suppose, that God could bear in his presence anything that in this respect was not the spotless image of himself—any one who did not unceasingly love him with the undivided powers of his mind and soul and strength? Could such an unalloyed nature endure what was not a spotless reflection of itself? Accordingly, we read, "He cannot look upon iniquity;" "the foolish cannot stand in his sight." "Sin is that abominable thing which he hates." Need we say, then, that the odious and mischievous properties of a thing which is diametrically opposed to God being what he is, when he is the hope of all the ends of the universe, and a source of infinite blessedness to himself because he is just what he is, that the character of such a thing must be so unparalleled, that it can be only adequately described by itself?

Viewed, therefore, as the enemy of God's nature, with what justness and force does our apostle characterize sin as "exceeding sinful." In what light, fellow sinner, does this matter present you, as opposed to the nature of that "Lord who changes not?"

You are now prepared for our second observation on sin, which is, that *it is contrary to God's claims*. It would be blasphemy to suppose, that God would adjust matters in his creation in such a way, as not to adapt them to his own nature, which must necessarily be the foundation and pattern of all things. Could he be infinitely good, if he did not consult his own infinite

rights, which call for all the love of which the creature is capable? Would it be proper in one who possessed perfect goodness, to form the intelligent and moral creatures of his hand on any other model than his own blessed nature? or to permit them to look to themselves or their fellow creatures, who, from the very law of their created being must of course be dependent, insufficient and vain, as the source of their blessedness? Moreover, in him, we all necessarily live and move and have our being; to him we owe "life, breath and all things." Is it not therefore his due, that we should love and serve him with every power of our hearts and minds? It would be, only in accordance with his own nature and with the necessary nature of his creatures, if God should require us to make him the centre of every affection and aspiration of our hearts. Can we suppose, therefore, that it may be otherwise? Does not his own revelation assure us, moreover, that thus it is? What, then, must be thought of the violation of claims founded upon the very nature of God? It is thought an evil to be punished by the judge, if we trample upon the trifling and ephemeral rights of human society; but who shall weigh in the balance the guilt of disregarding the claims of Him who is blessed forever more, and whose rights are necessarily eternal and immutable? Oh! fellow sinner, when you are convicted at the judgment seat of having withheld justice from one to whom you are so immeasurably indebted—how will you appear? where will you hide yourself? what will become of you? As all unite in approving the curse which banishes you from his pre-

sence and from the glory of his power, will you loathe your very self, because guilty of that which in the light of the last day will seem to be so "exceeding sinful," inasmuch as it is a disregard of the just claims of the Most High God!

But we observe in the third place, that *sin is contrary to the will of God*. This we should naturally expect. Can the will of a being so perfect and blessed as God, be inconsistent with his nature and claims? That will may often appear to creatures, so short-sighted as ourselves, to be arbitrary; but it is blasphemy to suppose, that it is ever in reality founded on anything except the highest reason and wisdom: and where can such reason and wisdom be discovered if not in his own nature and rights? Besides, none, to whom the will of God has been made known, can for a moment doubt, that in forming His will, God has consulted both his character and claims, and made it to accord in every respect with each. What, then, shall be thought of that wish or act, or course, which stands out, or runs, in opposition to the will of Him, who is so blessed and so wise! what of that creature who is so reckless as to conceive such a desire, to perpetuate such a deed, or to pursue such a path? How can sin be characterized except as "exceeding sinful," when it is the setting up the will of the creature of yesterday in hostility to that of the Ancient of days, who is God over all, blessed for evermore?

But we proceed to observe, in the last place, that sin is "exceeding sinful," inasmuch as *it is contrary to the law of God*. In fact, it is because sin is

the transgression of God's law, that it is sinful. All its effects, as opposed to the nature and claims and will of God, might be just as hateful and injurious as they now are, yet would it not be justly considered and punished as sin, unless God had uttered precepts and thus made known to the creatures his will. For else "who by searching could have found out God?" and it is only to him who knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to whom it is sin. It is precisely on this principle, that our apostle has pronounced sin so "exceeding sinful" in the text. God has not left his creatures without law. He who was so good as to create them would not allow them to wander as sheep without a shepherd. It is only by the violation of that rule with which he has supplied us, that we creatures sin. "Nay," says St. Paul, in the context, "I had not known sin but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." It is the fact, therefore, of such a being as God having made known his will, which gives to any disregard of that will on our part its peculiar aggravation, and which renders it so "exceeding sinful."

Moreover, it is, as we should from the character of the case have supposed it would be; the law is an exact transcript of God's nature, claims and will. The apostle assures us "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Oh! in what a light does this view of the law present its every transgression! It was ordained for life; it was given us for good; it was enacted, that by observing it we might be like the angels in heaven, that we might ourselves be the images of Him whom all the holy worship, that

the life of God might be enjoyed in our souls. But sin has made us find that which was ordained to life, to be unto death. Instead of our reaching the blessings which the law promised to all who would obey, we are brought by sin under the curse which the law denounces against disobedience. Instead of our being crowned with angels, we have, through sin, fallen into the condemnation of the devil. Thus sin, by perverting what was intended, and so well-adapted, for our highest and everlasting blessedness, into our irrevocable curse, "is exceeding sinful," and so sin by the commandment has become exceeding sinful. Oh! what a wreck is the sinner, as, accursed, he departs to his own place from the presence of his God! With what misery and despair and guilt does he embark upon the ocean of eternity! Can this be the same vessel originally freighted with such happiness and hope, and launched amid such rejoicings in the paradise of God? At whose door lies this frightful miscarriage? Whence is it, that that which seemed at first to be ordained for blessing of life now labours under the weight of curse and death?

It is sin which has wrought the fearful change. It is sin which has transformed the living image of God into a child of the wicked one. It is sin which has banished Adam and his posterity from heaven to hell. It is sin which has perverted the benevolent design of God, and turned the heir of righteousness and peace, into one who hates his God, and hath destroyed his own soul. Unto what, then, shall we compare sin? It can only be likened to itself. We can nowhere find terms to express its terrible malignity and

guilt. Let the apostle, aided by the spirit of inspiration, and labouring to describe its true nature, select the word which best conveys his conceptions of its evil character and effects; and in our text, he says of sin, it is "exceeding sinful."

My beloved friends, with what slight emotions do we confess ourselves to be sinners in truth and in the sight of God! Into what fearful ignorance of the true character of sin must we have fallen, to acknowledge its guilt with such utter unfeelingness! How faithless must we be of the light in which it is viewed by angelic and by all spiritual eyes! nay, of the very terms in which God describes and denounces it in the revelation which he has put into our hands! As a sinner, my hearer, you are loathed by all the holy hosts of God; as such you have arrayed yourself in opposition to the blessed and unchangeable nature and claims and will and law of God; the fearful guilt of this position you have assumed and can never of yourself shake off; you have brought yourself under the superhuman power of enmity to God; you are sold under sin; your very nature, so far as creature strength extends, is hopelessly and irreclaimably corrupt; as a furnace emits sparks, so it generates sinful thoughts. What then will the end be, when, at his judgment seat, you are brought into close contact with the sin-consuming God? Then, if not before, you will realize what is meant by the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

My beloved hearers, *how greatly does our subject magnify the grace of God which bringeth salvation!* The sinner is here presented to us as the enemy of God's nature; as one who has trampled upon God's

claims, disregarded his will, and violated his law. He is an object of indignation and scorn to the inhabitants of heaven—all the perfections of God cry out that vengeance should be dispensed. It is beyond the fallen creature's power to satisfy the demands of divine justice, or to break the habits and dominion of sin. None could have imagined it to be even within the infinite bounds of the divine capacity to devise a redemption for those who were hostile to all that is unchangeable in God. Whither, then, shall Adam's posterity look? Wretchedness and gloom fill their bosoms; all heaven is awaiting their doom. But when none could pity or redeem, then God's arm was made bare to work out salvation. As nothing short of this could vindicate the violated claims of the divine nature and law, God sent his only begotten Son on the humble and self-sacrificing message of love and mercy. "He was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." Thus clothed in flesh, and found in its sinful likeness, all the sinfulness of sin was reckoned his, and he bore it in his own body on the tree.

When lifted up upon the cross, Jesus cries to his fellow men upon all the ends of this fallen earth, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." When even his own, to whom he comes in this humble gracious form, refuse to believe, he sends his Spirit into their hearts. The third person of the holy Godhead that cannot look upon iniquity, is so far reconciled to the transgressor, that he brings himself into immediate contact with sin that is so exceeding sinful. By his almighty agency, he breaks its dominion. He leads the fallen soul with tears of repentance to its Saviour's feet. He imparts a justify-

ing, saving faith in that Saviour's blood. He implants a principle of peace within the heart. He waters the seed, and cultures it with forbearing and assiduous care. Oh! who can estimate the meekness and dove-like character of the Holy Ghost, as, with all the natural tendency of the holy Godhead to consume the sinner and his sin, he yet, like a father pitying his children, leads the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty to glory!

How gently does he deal with the exceeding sinfulness of that sin, which he finds in those human tabernacles, where he has taken up his dwelling! reproving their errors, restraining their forwardness, teaching their ignorance, comforting their despondency, chastening their earthly-mindedness, sanctifying their affections, guiding them until death, and making them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light! Oh! as he surrenders them into the hands of Jesus, who shall present them faultless before the presence of his Father's glory with exceeding joy—will not the innumerable company of angels, when they remember that these redeemed were once involved in all the exceeding sinfulness of sin, when they witness them reconciled to, glorying, in the perfect nature, the adjusted claims, the accomplished will, the magnified law of the unchanged God—will not those holy hosts join with one accord, to praise that grace which hath brought salvation to these souls?

But, in conclusion, we briefly ask, *How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?* When we call to mind the mercy by which it was prompted, the cost at which it was wrought, the gentleness with which it is applied, the ruin from which it redeems us, the

glory to which it exalts us; does not its rejection exceed in sinfulness the sin against which it was provided? Surely, comparatively we had not had sin, if Jesus had not come and spoken unto us. Despising the grace of Christ will be a virtual endorsing of our old sins; it will be choosing sin with all its sinfulness as our everlasting portion, it will be nerving ourselves as the enemies not only of the blessed nature and claims and will and law, but too, of the attractive mercy of God. Thus, the sinfulness of unbelief is of a deeper hue than the exceeding sinfulness of sin itself. Delay not, then, to wash away the sin of unbelief in the blood of Jesus Christ. Impute no unwillingness to save, to him who has proved his readiness by such humiliation and suffering and death; and who, moreover, has said: "him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out." Come now, to the fountain opened for the unclean, and be cleansed from the sinfulness of sin and unbelief, and be clothed with the righteousness of God.

## SERMON XXVIII.

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### THE CAUSE OF SEAMEN.

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Isaiah xlii. 10.

“SING UNTO THE LORD A NEW SONG, AND HIS PRAISE FROM THE END OF THE EARTH, YE THAT GO DOWN TO THE SEA.”

SHIPS may well be regarded as houses—differently constructed, it is true, from those which are erected on the land, made water-proof, and adapted in all their parts for the element in which they are to move, and the object for which they were designed. Their crews, too, may be viewed in the light of domestics—gathered, it may be, from different and mutually distant lands, but brought together within the same building, bound together by important ties and duties, and all alike subject to the patriarchal discipline of a common head. Why, in this obvious aspect of the case, should not the same religious obligations be supposed to devolve on the inmates of a ship, as are recognized and discharged by every Christian family on the land? The perils and dangers, from which every such floating household is daily preserved, are proverbial; and it is alike their privilege and duty not only *individually* but *collectively*, at least with

every rising and setting sun, to glorify their Maker and Preserver's name; to give thanks for the past and present, and to supplicate the continued protection of Him, who is "a covert from the storm," and who "rules the raging of the sea." Oh! if, in accordance with the benignant injunction of the Holy Ghost in our text, those "that go down to the sea" would, with a united heart and voice, "sing unto the Lord a new song," with what peace and love and joy and every fruit of the Spirit would each ship be freighted, as she pursued her trackless way to the haven whither she would be! What "praise" would ascend like incense from her decks, as she neared her destined port, and approached "the end of the earth!" what blessings would she not scatter in every harbor that was sought, gladdening by sympathy the heart of every child of God, and illumining the dark places of the earth!

We thus see, beloved hearers, that the Spirit who moved the holy men of old to speak, neglected not that portion of our redeemed fellow-creatures, in whose moral and spiritual interests, I would fain enlist your sympathies to night. Indeed, it would surprise, perhaps, even daily readers of the Bible to ascertain (as by reference in a Concordance of the Scriptures to such leading words as "ship" and "sea," they may readily do) the frequency with which allusion is made to those "whose business is on the great waters," and the prominence with which, as a class, they are brought forward on the sacred page. And, although it be true, that the truths and precepts of Revelation are so worded, as to include all possible "sorts and condi-

tions of men," and, therefore, all who are engaged in any new profession or trade which the progress of science and art may have originated, will yet find ample directions and encouragements suited to their case in holy writ—yet there are injunctions and promises proceeding from the mouth of God, specially designed to guide and cheer the mariner, and which, when he applies to himself, yield that peculiar light and comfort, which any other believer would enjoy, if addressed by name—such as Peter must have experienced when our Saviour said to him: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona." It was, indeed, an entirely untenable position, that a generous-hearted, but still ungodly captain of a little coaster, whom we had known from our boyhood, assumed, when, as we urged upon him the obligation of the Fourth Command, as a reason why he should not leave port upon the Sabbath day, he replied: "That was issued when they did not navigate the Atlantic, but merely traded between neighboring cities in the Mediterranean." But who sees not that while the hard heart of this sailor resisted the force of this universal law, the words of our text might easily have penetrated with melting effect? "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea."

During that succession of ages and centuries, brethren, in which those that were inspired lived, from Moses until St. John the Divine—as we have seen was intimated by this bluff friend of ours, navigation was pursued on a limited scale. Traversing some inland sea, crossing in propitious weather the British

channel, sailing within sight of the coast, these were their most adventurous feats! How tedious and perilous, as the Gospels testify, was transportation over the narrow lakes of Palestine! It was against St. Paul's advice, that one of the frail and unwieldy barks of those days, was exposed to the dangers of the Mediterranean, during the winter months; and his foresight was proved by the result. Indeed, it is now almost impossible to conceive of the slow and laborious process by which merchandize and intelligence were then conveyed. Their means of communication would be regarded in this age of steam and lightning, not as oars, but drags. "The Governor among the nations," has, however, preserved one almost stationary, that we, whom He has favored, might be able to mark by it, as a mile-post, the progress with which we have been blessed. The Junk, which now navigates the China Sea, affords a favorable specimen of the ships of Tarshish, so famous on the prophetic page.

But the usefulness of these primitive vessels, notwithstanding their snail-like motion, was soon displayed. They became the media of communication between different portions of our race, whose mutual disgust with the jargon at Babel, had repelled each other to opposite sections of the globe. They exchanged between tribes and lands intelligence of the inventions and discoveries which had been severally made, together with the products of varied soils, and the ores which were embedded in the earth. Thus was navigation, even in its infancy, the means by which a gracious providence partially removed the

curse, which our proud aspirations and designs—while speaking a common tongue, and enabled to throw into a common stock the acquirements of each, towards the improvement of the great family of man—the curse which our fallen presumption had called down. This art soon proved itself alchymic. It became a magic wand in the hands of all who wielded it, converting into treasure every object that it touched. It fructified the most barren soil, and rendered the rocks of Tyre more luxuriant than the most spicy isles. Through it, Solomon made silver and gold at Jerusalem as plenteous as stones. Nations learned to regard it as the source of wealth, and plied this newly discovered art with all their powers. It was soon recognized as the key of the world's storehouse—so that the people from whom it was wrested were impoverished; while they, who exclusively appropriated it, were universal lords. The Romans, with their overpowering legions on the land, were yet crippled, and forced to contend further with their African rivals for supremacy on the sea. The Holy Ghcst, even in those early days, hath shown his appreciation of the importance of those who navigated the waters, by frequent calls upon them, as in our text, to “sing unto the Lord a new song:” and likewise of the value of that future traffic between lands, which was to be carried on upon the bosom of the deep, by prophesying, among the triumphs of Zion, its consecration to her cause—saying, “the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee.”

If, then, the art of Navigation in its origin proved so irresistible an engine in transforming the condition and prospects of the world—what beneficial results

did it produce, when it empowered the Portuguese to double the Southern Cape of Africa, and introduce to each other the continents of Europe and Asia! Not only, too, were Columbus and his colleagues viewed as gods by the savage residents on these shores, but with scarcely less wonder were they looked upon, on their return to the old world! More durable and important, surely, has their discovery proved, than if they had realized those golden dreams, with the narration of which they filled the greedy ears not only of European serfs, but of their lords. We, at this moment, possess in our civil and religious freedom, as the boon of the daring and discovery of these navigators, a treasure more precious than gold; which could not have been bought—a treasure, however, which, while we now enjoy, and should be thankful for, it requires no sage to be fearful of, in its future developments; and no prophet to foretell, will prove “evil” like “the heart of unbelief,” if it be committed to the keeping and direction of fallen men, and be not preserved and fashioned by the providence and Spirit of our God.

And, brethren, though there now remains no portion of the habitable globe, the discovery of which by those “who go down to the sea,” would be so brilliant in its announcement, nor so magnificent in its effects—yet let none imagine the profession of these men has lost any of its consequence. On its continuance and success, it surely needs no profound political economist to perceive, that the wealth and power of Britain and America depend. Cut off from it, the latter nation would begin to dwindle, and the first would sink at once into insignificance. If, indeed, by any mysteri-

ous providence, all "who do business on the great waters" were engulfed, it is quite evident, that destitution, misery and wailing would be general throughout the civilized earth. These men are, humanly speaking, an essential source of our entire present prosperity. Through their hands, not only our bodily luxuries are received, but our very intellectual and social interests obtain that nourishment which is necessary to our growth and advancement as a species. And if ever national jealousies be extirpated, and monopolies abolished, the navigators of the deep, by the blessing of God, are yet destined, in a way equally effectual, though perhaps less striking than in the past, to unite men by the close ties of interest in a lasting and universal peace, to surround the inhabitant of the most unfavored land with the products and luxuries of every clime, and to further man in the progress of temporal knowledge, refinement and power, to a point, even beyond what the earth-bound hearts of the advocates of "human perfectibility" have ever conceived.

Such, then, are the marvellous, but unexaggerated effects which sailors have exercised, and may yet exert, upon the destinies of the world! To sum up the amount of our indebtedness to them, would be no easy task! As a class, they no doubt stand pre-eminent among those, who have bettered the temporal fortunes of men!

It is, nevertheless, my hearers, no extraordinary phenomenon in the moral world, for the most useful instruments to be neglected and spurned. The inmate

of a splendid and luxurious mansion scarcely thinks of the rough and solid masonry on which his symmetrical pillars and ornamental cornices rest. Many never trouble themselves with the inquiry—what are the foundations of the superstructure of civilization—how has the wilderness of this continent been transformed—why are wigwams no longer seen, and why have savages, half-clad with skins, picking their way through briars and thickets, given place to such well-provided, and yet busy thousands as throng our streets? Some would shun, as pollution and disgrace, contact with one, on whose calling depend their own prosperity, and ultimately perhaps, their lives. This revulsion, too, is readily excused, when we consider the unenviable reputation for moral recklessness which these sons of the ocean have attained.

But, are not the followers of Jesus verily guilty, in having put forth so little effort, to lift up from their degradation those who are their fellow-immortals, redeemed by the same precious blood with themselves, and to whom they are, humanly speaking, indebted for all they have? Nay, nay, have not current opinions and practices tended to sink the sailor to his present level of wretchedness and sin? In a nation of unrivaled power and wealth, exalted, too, to the pinnacle she now occupies by the labors and perils of this same hardy class—justly famed, also, for its enterprise and sacrifice in doing good,—has it not been an ordinary occurrence, under the name of “impressment” for the public service and defence, to seize upon the seaman in the streets, and tear him violently away from the duties and

endearments of home—exacting obedience for years under terror of the bayonet and the lash? What kidnapping more unfeeling and unjust—what slavery more galling than this?

Among ourselves, too, is not that officer a representative of a large class, who declared, that though a temperance-man himself, he yet “gave his men grog rations; for if they all became temperate, they would leave the service, and the Navy could not be maintained?” Quite general is the notion, that unless sailors be morally debased, they will never encounter the toils and exposure of their profession. Such, too, is the power of self-interest in our fallen state, that unless this opinion were proved to be unfounded, the friends of the seaman might well despair of awakening any general concern in his behalf. But even corporate bodies (generally denounced as *soulless*) have given substantial proof of their interest in all efforts for his good. Insurance Companies, it is well known, under the full persuasion, that vessels are more safely and wisely navigated by the sober and religious, than by the drunken and profane, contribute largely towards attempts to improve the sailor’s intellectual and moral state. Notwithstanding, however, this partial change in public sentiment—how much yet remains to be accomplished in this respect. Long will it be, we fear, before the mariner is elevated to a level with the landsman, in our view. What a burst of universal indignation would be aroused, were it known that any of our fellow-townsmen were drugged, and robbed, and sold into temporary servitude! Like Admah and Zeboim, the names of the offenders would soon be a

terror and reproach. Oh! how little sympathy in seamen's behalf must exist—what erroneous views of their claims and our duties obtain, since when they are the sufferers, crimes of this kind excite no notice.

Thus almost excluded from the pale of human kindness and protection,—proverbially generous, unsuspecting and impulsive—is it wonderful, that he has become the prey of harpies and tempters,—the hard-earnings of years filched from him in as many days, and he revelling, during his long-expected holiday on shore, in debauchery and sin? Breathing such an atmosphere, spiritual disease is of course inhaled; and he goes forth to spread the plague. In Christian countries, his company is shunned by all who respect themselves, and would fain preserve a good reputation among their fellow-men. In semi-civilized and unevangelized China, riots of nominally Christian sailors, upon the Sabbath-day, have been quelled by an armed police. In the islands of the sea, it is well known, drunkenness, profanity, and unmentionable licentiousness have followed in their train. Missionaries of the Cross have been effectually impeded in their efforts to enlighten and convert souls in Pagan lands, by the withering example and influence of these visitors from Christian shores. Amid the incomparable solemnities of his own death-bed, it was the prayer of a collegiate acquaintance of our own, on an Indian isle, where he had spent the last ten years of his life in labors to extend the knowledge of the Saviour's name, that God would convert seamen, from being "the corrupters of the heathen, into the messengers of salvation." Indeed, so serious is this obstacle in the way of the spread of

the Gospel, that it has begun now to be agitated, whether it would not be the most effectual means of advancing the Redeemer's kingdom, to establish a Chaplaincy for sailors, and thus forestall, if possible, the mischief which they occasion, at every missionary station on a heathen coast. Many of these have already been instituted, and their influence for good is felt.

Oh! who can compute the glorious effects which would be wrought, if instead of the moral pestilence, with which ships are now generally laden as they move from port to port, they were navigated by those whose hearts had been turned by the Spirit to comply with the injunction in our text: "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea!"

Would that in each succeeding century of the Christian era, they who have been born of the Spirit, had seconded aright the gracious wishes in the seaman's behalf, of Him who had begotten them to a lively hope! that they had without fainting reiterated in the sailor's ears such exhortations as that in our text! We would not now be deploring him, as sunk even below the level of his fallen fellow-men.

But Christians of every name have begun in the present age to mourn over their supineness! The claims of this interesting and neglected class of men have excited attention. Efforts have been put forth to supply our past lack of service. "Homes," (to use the technical, and, we may well add, *expressive*, phrase—for these rovers, however dissimilar in other respects, are yet in one particular like the Son of Man, "not

having where to lay their head,") "homes" have been erected for their accommodation, where they can find decent and comfortable board, and where they can be safe from the snares and violence of the pirates that are allowed to infest the land. "Bethels" have been reared in most of the chief ports of Christendom, and even amid the temples of the false gods on heathen ground—where they who have been saved from the perils of the deep may render thanks to their Almighty Preserver, and learn under the pilotage of Jesus how to escape the shipwreck of their souls.

These "works of faith and labors of love" in their behalf, have not proved in vain. The results are already far-spread, important, and visible.

In several of our National ships, only the veriest fractions of the hundreds numbered in their crews, continue to draw that daily allowance of liquor, which the Government still so thoughtlessly deals out. Sailors have thus proved that they can refuse a bait when offered, without the temptation of which, it had been supposed, their services could not be engaged. Nay, almost ludicrous is the terror displayed by many seamen, on returning from a voyage, lest they should fall into the hands of landlords of the old stamp—whose houses they would voluntarily have sought a few years ago. So general, indeed, among them now is the consciousness of their own inability to cope with those who lie in wait for both their bodies and souls, that, upon a recent occasion, when a frigate entered the Chesapeake Bay, her crew combined in the charter of a steamboat to convey them to Baltimore, because in Norfolk, there was no "Sailor's Home."

In every place, they patronise the boarding-houses which their "friends" have erected for their accommodation. How unlike are the scenes which these present, from those haunts of sin which they formerly frequented! How free from drunkenness and reveling! What decency and order are visible in every arrangement! All are supplied with papers, containing the current news of the day. Bibles, Tracts, and other religious books are placed in their hands. Well-furnished with these, they go forth to encounter the dangers of the sea, and the still greater peril of the corruption of their "good manners" by "evil communication."

Large and attentive congregations of weather-beaten tars, frequent the house of prayer. To many of them has it proved truly a "Bethel." They have found that God was in the place. He has appeared, to bless them with the gift of forgiveness and sonship. These have gone forth, in all their characteristic simplicity and generosity, like the apostolic sailor, Andrew, to announce that they have found the Messiah, and to acquaint others with their Lord. Revivals in these Bethels, and on ship-board, are no unfrequent thing.

When once truly converted, too, how affecting is the more than ordinary value which the sailor attaches to the holy Scriptures! Cut off from the advantages of the Sanctuary, and many other religious privileges, the word of God is regarded, with no dainty stomach, but with a hungry heart, as his "bread of life." Recently, one of these sons of the ocean, who, like Paul, had "thrice suffered shipwreck," was observed, when thrown penniless and friendless on the shore, to

open the wet leaves of his Bible, which, upon each of the three occasions, he had succeeded in saving, as though he could have clasped it to his breast, with a feeling of which the infant's hymn is an expression :

“Holy Bible, Book Divine,  
Precious treasure, thou art mine.”

Nor are such individuals rare. They begin in some good degree, to leaven the lump. Frequently, it is in the power of missionaries to testify of the favorable change that has occurred in the conduct and influence of crews, which in the course of trade visit heathen ports. In a great majority of our vessels engaged in the whaling business, all that can intoxicate is proscribed. On board some of them, a strict observance of the Sabbath is required. Lately, in one of these ships, though previously for a long while they had taken nothing, several “monsters of the deep,” were allowed to play around with impunity on the Lord's-day, while the crew were fully aware that a storm before the morrow's light would have dispersed the school. It is, in short, the testimony of those best acquainted with the facts, that the most striking change is observable in the character and outward deportment of a large portion of these outcasts.

Are not these results abundant rewards of all that has been done? How many a widowed mother's heart has been gladdened by the return of a son, reclaimed for both worlds, whom it had been beyond her power to curb at home, and whom she had hopelessly given up for time and for eternity, when he left his maternal roof to enter on a sailor's life! How many

a soul has been rescued from degradation and sin through life, and from perdition beyond the grave! Yea, a beginning has been made, which requires only perseverance in the same path, to ensure perhaps the elevation of seamen to a level with other classes of their fellow-men, and to secure among them a fair proportion of those which shall be saved.

An opportunity is now afforded us to co-operate in this great work.

Our citizens have not hitherto wholly neglected their duty in this respect. Most self-sacrificing and praiseworthy individual effort has been put forth. Societies have been formed, which, in a limited sphere, have been active and useful. Two small homes and bethels have been procured, in which, annually, hundreds have been shielded from harm, and brought within the Gospel sound, and other influences of a sanctifying kind. Many distressed seamen have been relieved, hundreds outwardly reclaimed, and several hopefully born again.

The conviction, however, has become general, that these separate and detached efforts are inadequate to meet the call of duty. The societies have been merged into one; and now, by a common effort of the seaman's friends, it is proposed to secure a "Home" for these destitute and neglected strangers, which will be ample for their wants, and compare well with those other institutions of benevolence, with which our fair city is studded, and for which it is distinguished throughout the land.

Brethren, let us obey this call for help. You will find it to be so considerately made, that, while the

rich may cast in of their abundance to further the work, almost the poorest in our flock can secure membership in that community, which has been organized to erect a "Home" for wanderers who are temporally and spiritually houseless.

Brethren, we would lure you with no false lights. According to our reading of the prophecies, before all of any class or calling are wholly sanctified to the Lord, there is to come first a great falling away. Yea, "Babylon," little as she is now feared, and great as was the blow which her city and empire sustained in the fifteenth century, is yet to renew her conquests in the spiritual world, to rivet her chains of darkness upon the souls of men, and almost to exterminate the saints of the Most High. And, when at last her predicted curse and overthrow descends, we read, that among other classes which shall bewail her fate, "every ship-master, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, shall stand afar off, and cry, when they see the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they shall cast dust on their heads, and cry, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas! Alas! that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea, by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate." Before, then, "the abundance of the sea" is consecrated unto Zion, we believe, that it, together with the produce of every trade and land, will be perverted to the use and aggrandizement of Rome.

But while we hold out no immediate prospect of the universal conversion of seamen as a class—yet among these, as in every sort and condition, Jesus

hath his redeemed. And, in now laboring for the temporal and spiritual salvation of sailors, whose debtors we are, we will be able to certify our Lord, when he cometh, that we sought to glorify him, by turning from sin even those who are lost; and we shall see jewels in his crown, which received their unearthly polish, and were set in that bright diadem, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, conveyed through our enforcement, upon the most unpromising of fallen men, of the exhortation in the text: "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea."



## SERMON XXIX.

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### THE MOURNER MARKED AND SAVED.

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Ezekiel ix. 2-6.

“AND, BEHOLD, SIX MEN CAME FROM THE WAY OF THE HIGHER GATE, WHICH LIETH TOWARD THE NORTH, AND EVERY MAN A SLAUGHTER-WEAPON IN HIS HAND; AND ONE MAN AMONG THEM WAS CLOTHED WITH LINEN, WITH A WRITER’S INKHORN BY HIS SIDE; AND THE GLORY OF THE GOD OF ISRAEL WAS GONE UP FROM THE CHERUB WHEREUPON HE WAS, TO THE THRESHOLD OF THE HOUSE. AND HE CALLED TO THE MAN CLOTHED WITH LINEN, WHICH HAD THE WRITER’S INKHORN BY HIS SIDE; AND THE LORD SAID UNTO HIM, GO THROUGH THE MIDST OF THE CITY, THROUGH THE MIDST OF JERUSALEM, AND SET A MARK UPON THE FOREHEADS OF THE MEN THAT SIGH, AND THAT CRY FOR ALL THE ABOMINATIONS THAT BE DONE IN THE MIDST THEREOF. AND TO THE OTHERS HE SAID IN MY HEARING, GO YE AFTER HIM THROUGH THE CITY, AND SMITE: LET NOT YOUR EYE SPARE, NEITHER HAVE YE PITY: SLAY UTTERLY OLD AND YOUNG, BOTH MAIDS, AND LITTLE CHILDREN, AND WOMEN: BUT COME NOT NEAR ANY MAN UPON WHOM IS THE MARK; AND BEGIN AT MY SANCTUARY.”

THE vision, of which our text forms a part, was vouchsafed in an age of great sin and affliction. It was, too, an age marked by the Providence and Spirit of God. Between the days of Moses and of Christ, there never was another period so distinguished for the dispensations of the Divine hand and of the Holy Ghost. God then moved the greatest king on earth against his people, to punish them for their backsli-

dings; and they met with an overthrow, which had befallen no other nation. All these events were minutely threatened, and afterwards recorded by inspired men. The few who remained faithful in the midst of the general apostacy, were also abundantly encouraged by promises of deliverance from the impending troubles, and by full prophetic disclosures of evangelical times. A bright constellation of inspired worthies shone forth on that dark age. We need only say, these were the times, in which Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel lived, besides many less prominent Scriptural characters.

But the precise stage of that wonderful period of Jewish history, which our text leads us to contemplate, is this:—The ten tribes of Israel had already been visited for their sins, and removed by their conqueror from the land of promise. Judah, too, had suffered severely, although more partially. Jehoiachin, the king, with his leading nobles, had been carried into captivity; Jerusalem and the temple had been spoiled; “none remained save the poorest of the people,” and over these Nebuchadnezzar had appointed Zedekiah of the former seed-royal as his vicegerent. Jeremiah remained in his native, but now tributary land; while our prophet was numbered with the captives, whom the Babylonish conqueror had transported. These heavy afflictions taught wisdom and faith neither to those who were left at home, nor to those who were carried abroad. Both alike persisted in their rebellions against the Most High, and buoyed up themselves with vain earthly expectations. They, who resided in Jerusalem, were encouraging themselves to throw off

the Babylonish yoke; while the captives looked for the success of their brethren's revolt, and anticipated their own speedy restoration. It was, therefore, a chief duty of the two faithful prophets of the Lord, in their different spheres, to discountenance and denounce these false and sinful hopes. And the vision before us was one of those revelations, with which Ezekiel was favoured, in discharging the task of discouraging the faithless expectations of his fellow captives. It was granted to the prophet, and he was charged to proclaim it, that the aggravated sin and certain punishment of the inhabitants of Jerusalem might be disclosed; and the captives be induced no longer to trust in the rescue of their brethren, but to look up to Him, from whom alone cometh help.

Let us now briefly consider the vision itself.

It would appear, then, that Ezekiel was sitting in his house, with the elders of Judah before him, when, in his own strong but inspired language, "the hand of the Lord God fell there upon him." Under its influence, he saw a human likeness, formed as it were of fire. The prophet's description of this heavenly visitant is not unlike that, which St. John gives of our Lord, when he appeared to him in Patmos: and there is every reason to believe, that what Ezekiel beheld, was intended to represent the Son of God. This wonderful person seemed, in the prophet's trance, to "put forth the form of a hand," and taking him "by a lock of his head," to "lift him up between the earth and heaven," and "to bring him in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door," of the temple. There he was commanded to lift up his eyes; and the first object on which they

rested, even in God's house, and near his altar was an idolatrous image, which, because it provoked the Lord to anger, was termed by the Spirit "Jealousy." Our prophet was then directed "to turn yet again," that he might see even greater abominations. And behind a wall, which would seem to have been built for the purpose of concealing the wickedness, and through a hole which he discovered and enlarged, he beheld "portrayed upon the wall around about, every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel." And there, in these "chambers of their imagery," were discovered "seventy of the ancients of Israel" enveloped in a thick cloud of incense, which they were offering up before these senseless pictures. In another direction, he beheld women "weeping for Tammuz," an idolatrous god, the annual lamentations for whose fabled departure were accompanied with the most licentious and unmentionable crimes. And further in, between the very "porch and altar," were seen "five and twenty" priests, worshipping the sun, with "their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the East." In view of these abominations, which, though beheld in vision, were undoubtedly a faithful representation of what was actually occurring; the Lord declared his purpose to the prophet of "dealing in fury," "not to spare or pity with his eye," and to be deaf "though they cried in his ears with a loud voice."

The vision then proceeds, in the text, to represent the way, in which God would execute his wrath. "Six men," each "with a slaughter-weapon in his hand," were made to approach. "Among them, was

one clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side." This last, the Lord addressed, and said: "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others, he said: "Go ye after him through the city and smite; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity; slay utterly, old and young, both maids and little children and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary."

How divinely adapted was all this to teach the captives the justice, the certainty, the awfulness of the punishment, which awaited the promised land! From it they might have learnt, that only Jeremiah, Baruch, and the few others, who, with them, lamented over the sins and impending desolations of Jerusalem; and who, on account of their faithfulness, were despised and persecuted, were yet marked by the All-seeing eye, and should escape the coming vengeance. By it, they might have been led in faith to renounce their present hopes, and to number themselves with that "little flock," who grieved over the apostacy of men and the just anger of God.

But whatever peculiar adaptedness to his contemporaries, our prophet's vision may have had, it is not without application to every faithless and ill-deserving generation of God's visible people; and it has lessons of profit, if contemplated in faith, for the members of our Church.

We learn, then, first, from Ezekiel's vision, *what*

*abominable doctrines and practices may exist in a true outward Church of Christ!*

There can be no doubt of the visible Church of the Lord being absolutely limited to the Jews, in our prophet's day. The standards of this church too, were pure. They were contained in, and confined to the word of God. The Church, also, had been miraculously founded by God himself. Its priesthood had been presented unbroken in the appointed line. Even in the degenerate days of our vision; and when they were nigh unto destruction, yet did the Jews pride and vaunt themselves on their ecclesiastical pretensions, "saying," according to Jeremiah, "the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." And yet we have been permitted, in the inspired word, to accompany our entranced prophet, and to see the errors and iniquities of this church unveiled. We beheld there, publicly exposed, in the temple of him who has denominated himself "Holy" and "Jealous," the image of an idol god. We were introduced into the secret chambers of their imagery, and witnessed the ancients of Israel, with censers in their hands, before forms of "creeping things" and of "abominable beasts." We heard the weeping of the women for the most degraded of the heathen idols. We saw the priests turning their backs on the Lord, and their faces toward the East and worshipping the sun. And, as regards the real doctrine entertained by these priests and members of the Church, notwithstanding they retained the Bible as their professed creed, and boasted of themselves as servants of Jehovah, we can be at no loss,

for that also was revealed in the vision to our prophet. They said, "The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth."

Now, brethren, let it not for one moment be supposed, that these were the errors of an early and untutored age; and that it would be a libel on the enlightened and refined men of our day to esteem them as capable of such sins. Sin results from nature and not from education. It is of itself obvious to every spiritual mind, and it has in substance often been remarked, that while every branch of science has been incalculably improved; and while in all secular knowledge we are much advanced beyond ancient generations and savage tribes, yet that true religion, is after all, an experimental, personal thing,—that no outward advantages, nothing short of or under the Spirit of God, will avail to convert and sanctify the soul; and therefore, that in all material respects, every age, from the first to the present, has stood on the same level before God, equally dependent for every spiritual faculty and attainment, upon the gifts of his sovereign grace. Let then the Spirit of God be withdrawn—let us be thus given up to a reprobate mind; and, we say, not only that the men of our day will entertain feelings and lusts corresponding to those heinous sins of the Jewish church, which were disclosed in vision to our prophet: but we insist that under varied pretences, they would essentially adopt the very forms of idolatry and crime of which Israel was guilty.

This is no fanciful view. It is supported by facts. The Papal Church includes within her pale, men as learned, as intelligent and refined, as can be found in any other

quarter; and yet it is declared, in articles which we all receive as Scriptural, and which can readily be proved to be such, that that communion embraces "blasphemous fables" repugnant to the Word "and Sacraments of God," and that she practices "dangerous deceits." It would not require us to pursue any original, and what might be supposed doubtful train of reasoning, to draw a strict analogy between Roman idolatries, and those superstitions, that are exposed and denounced in our vision as common in "the chambers of imagery," which were partitioned off, and screened the Jewish Temple. And it is not now a spiritual truth, which can only be discerned by the eye of the renewed man, and which can only be traced out and discovered by those, who are capable of referring to confessed principles, their power to produce effects,—but it is a *fact*, which cannot be doubted by an honest carnal mind, that there are within the bounds of a church, whose constitution and standards are of the same Protestant character, nay, essentially identical, with our own—men, who sympathise and vie with Rome in her unscriptural doctrines and idolatrous rites—regarding (not to mention errors more spiritual perhaps, but equally important), bread and wine as God, substituting the washing of water for the regeneration of the Holy Ghost, inculcating penance, and advocating the invocation of saints; together with reverence for images, paintings, and so-called relics. There are those too within our own pale, who are allowed with impunity to sympathise with these, to advocate their views and conduct, and to bid them "God speed." The number of those who might be publicly convicted

before any honest tribunal, of countenancing these things, is large; and they are not few, who evince no shock at these events, and who may be charitably supposed, either as sympathising with those who dishonor and disturb the peace of Israel, or, at least, as having no spiritual sense to discern the sin and injurious effects of such a course.

Brethren, there is a close connection between erroneous doctrines and immoral practices. If these things be tolerated long in our midst, the sanctifying and restraining, as well as the enlightening spirit of God will be grieved, and depart. We shall be given up, not only to strong delusion that we should believe a lie, but to a reprobate mind, in which we will work all kinds of uncleanness with greediness. Our Zion will fall to the same level of moral, as well as doctrinal corruption, to which Rome has sunk. Events which have transpired within the last three years, and at the public disclosure of which the nation stood amazed, and we were ashamed and bowed our head among our sister Protestant churches, will become of common occurrence, and pass uncensured and unnoticed. Even now, such reprobates find respected advocates, and these degrading sins will be committed under the curse of God; and even while our own Articles and Liturgy remain as pure and Scriptural as they do at present. No created barriers will shield us from this flood of immorality and ruin. Nothing under the Spirit of God can give us as a church, purity of life: and He will be righteously withdrawn.

And oh! brethren, be persuaded, God has ways of his own for punishing such dishonor upon his name. Our sins will not only be thus in themselves our afflic-

tion, but they may call down upon our heads further and positive curses. See, to what terrible evils the Jewish Church in our vision, was delivered up—the faithful few among them mocked and persecuted, and the entire body spoiled and removed. Look at Israel now, scattered over the face of the earth—a by-word and reproach among every people. God hath cut off the natural branches, and grafted us in, who were naturally of the wild olive. Boast not, then; but since “God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.” Witness the so-called Roman Church, under what a spiritual blight does she now labor! To what greater degradation and ruin is she yet reserved—when the few, who yet, as we trust, belong to the Lord in her, will, as sure as prophecy, be bidden to come out of her; and she shall fall as Babylon the great. Where is the security, where the promise of God, that the great body of Protestants will not once more become identified with her; and spiritual darkness and bloody persecution characterize the times to come? Oh! tell me, my hearers, are there no “chambers of imagery” in your hearts, which should be the temples of the Lord, and which, if the cross and the stake were the only alternatives, would disqualify you from protesting against reigning and intolerant error—which would, in truth, lead you easily to glide into the outward forms of idolatry, because you already in your affections, cleave to, and worship, those which are no gods? Look, then, into your hearts. Examine their recesses. Who sits there enthroned? Does no creature receive such honor there as to provoke the Lord of that temple

to jealousy? In those "inner chambers," are there not traced the forms of some fleshly lust, or of some earthly object, the promptings of which you follow, and the thoughts of which engross your mind? If so, then are you prepared to fall a victim, either to the seductions or threatenings of every error. And oh! when we think of the little evidence of vital godliness and entire devotedness which exists in our midst, and indeed throughout our land—what general spiritual dearth prevails, betokening a state in which most are following their own and not the things of Jesus Christ, what materials now exist, prepared to God's hand, with which he might "deal in fury," should he see fit, and should he be tempted, by our crying errors and sins, to visit us in wrath! Truly every spiritual mind discerns, that the elements of our punishment are already in existence! The earth may at any time begin to quake, the mists to settle upon us, and the lightnings to descend! May God, then, in his sovereign mercy, avert from us the evils which we deserve—and which, from the example before us, in the vision we have seen, secondly, that *he sometimes is provoked to send even upon a Church unquestionably his.*

But, thirdly, we learn, too, *what false hopes may, under such awful circumstances, be entertained.*

When Jeremiah, at Jerusalem, predicted the self-same evils, which Ezekiel in the text foresaw, near Babylon, and when, as an emblem of the servitude to Nebuchadnezzar, which awaited the Jews, he was directed to put a yoke upon his own neck, you all remember how confidently a false prophet foretold success and peace, and how indignantly he broke off

the yoke. It was impossible to make the king, the princes, or the people believe, that trouble was deserved and near at hand. They *would* still trust in lying words, saying, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." Yet God fulfilled his threatening.

Most of us have read the miserable delusions with which, according to the Jewish historian, his countrymen buoyed up their sinking hopes and fortunes, on the eve of their final overthrow. They proudly and selfishly misconstrued and misapplied the promises of God.

And is not the Roman Church, at this day, sustained and encouraged by the most unfounded views and expectations?

Brethren, on what are we relying as the security of our beloved Church? Is it on Christ's promise: "Lo, I am with you alway; even to the end of the world?" There surely can be no better confidence. But oh! see to it, then, that we are of those, to whom the promise *is* made. Point not, as evidence of your interest in this promised grace, to the three-fold order of our ministry, and to our inheriting this institution in the regular way. For while this Scriptural form of government should be highly prized, yet we regard it as a Scriptural truth, that that succession to the apostles, which God regards, is in a *spiritual, and no bodily line*,—that it consists, not *in the imposition of men's hands*, but *in being apprehended to preach the Gospel by the Holy Ghost*. Nay, we are convinced, that the so-called doctrine of apostolical succession has become a *Dagon* in our midst; and we expect,

if it be not soon removed from its idolatrous position, it must necessarily, by a stronger than man's hand, be prostrated before the ark. The spiritually-minded will be compelled to renounce it in some effectual way, if they would preserve God's love and blessing.

Are any among us, then, disposed unscripturally to exalt ourselves above our fellow-Protestants in this respect? While, for our part, we would be known as utterly repudiating the idea of unchurching other Christian communions—we would yet say to our own ultra brethren—"Be it as your claim—still be not high-minded, but fear. Though, your pretensions were as exclusive, and as well-founded as those of the Jews—remember the Baptist's address:" "Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." And if the so-called doctrine of "apostolical succession" be the great basis of our hopes of escaping punishment for the errors and iniquities which exist within our pale—the present state of the natural Israel is but a picture of our doom—we are involved in the destinies of Rome.—"Tekel" is already inscribed upon our Church, and it needs no prophet, but a simple believer in God's word, to declare that our inheritance shall be divided and wrested from our hands. Let others judge for themselves on this point. We express the fear, that these false hopes but too generally prevail.

But, fourthly, and lastly, we learn from our vision, *in the discharge of what particular duty lies in the worst extremity, our only hope of escape.*

Among the six armed ministers of God's holy ven-

geance, the prophet saw one messenger of peace. A "writer's inkhorn" was suspended from his side, and he was directed to "go through the midst of the city, and to set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that *sighed*, and *cried* for all the abominations that were done in the midst thereof." And while the six companions were enjoined to follow him as their leader, and beginning at the sanctuary, to slay utterly, and without distinction, all others whom they met, they yet were cautioned against "coming near any man upon whom was the mark."

To an unsurpassed degree, brethren, as you well know, did the saints of that day weep over the sins and calamities of the Church. Isaiah declares, respecting the remnant, that they "roared all like bears," "they mourned sore like doves." The "Lamentations" of Jeremiah occupy an entire book. Ezekiel shows, in our text, how those, who sighed and cried, were marked and saved by the Lord. And Daniel, in view of "his own sin and that of his people Israel," sought God "by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth and ashes."

And oh! these spiritual distresses, in view of the sins and errors of their age, have always characterized the people of God. David exclaims, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law." And our blessed Lord himself wept over the deserved and sure judgments of Jerusalem. There is a tenderness in the new-born soul (however cold, and even apparently stern may be the outward man,) when contemplating the evils and punishment of sin—whether it arise from love and pity for the perishing,

or from conscious participation by nature in sin's defilements and deserts, (from which we are only preserved by God's sovereign help,) or whether it spring from desires for the glory of triumphing grace,—there is a tenderness which melts the heart. And he, who can walk amidst the unclean and unbelieving, without observing and pitying their spiritual woes, betrays a nature that is unrenewed, a mind unlike that which was in Christ Jesus. Sighing and crying, therefore, in such degenerate days as those of our prophet, were esteemed necessary signs and proofs of being born of God—the presence or absence of these tokens was regarded as sufficient indications of one's spiritual state, of whether, or not, a professed member of the Church really believed, after a justifying, saving sort, in Christ who was to come. Such, then, were the grounds of that order, which the man in the vision, who had the writer's inkhorn by his side, received. The mourners in Zion were marked and saved, because their grief proved them to be subjects of the renewing operation of the Holy Ghost, and believers in the Son of God.

How unerringly, we may feel assured, were the furious soldiery of Nebuchadnezzar, (when they sacked the city, guided by the hand of God, and, in fulfilment of the prophet's vision,) restrained from laying hands on those, who had the Holy Ghost's invisible and spiritual mark! Then Jeremiah, and all others with him, who were sealed by the Spirit, and who had sighed and cried over the dishonor, that was heaped upon the worship and cause of God, realized the promise and escaped unhurt. Whatever infamy they had

endured—however their own faith at times may have sensibly failed them, and they sorrowed without hope, yet were they ultimately owned and protected by the Lord.

Brethren, ye who discern spiritual things, cannot but perceive sore evils in our beloved Church. They are sufficient to call down on us the fury of God. And whether your fears on account of sin, or your hopes in God's mercy through Christ prevail for Zion, the duty is urgent to sigh and cry. Thus, only, if through anything done by man, can our desolations be averted. Though God be threatening and preparing vengeance for our sins, yet it may be, that he is not so set on our fall, as in the case of Judah, when he declared that even such men as Noah, Daniel and Job should not be heard in their behalf. Then weep when you remember Zion. Let our requests be made known unto God for that portion of his visible ark, to which our affections so closely cling, and which is at present the object of our mingled fears and hopes. Who can say but the cloud of God's anger may pass away? "Then shall he turn us again, and cause his face to shine, and we shall be saved."

Nor can we close, without being led by our subject to advert to other sins and judgments, that beset and threaten a single portion of Christ's Church.

Brethren, if the man in Ezekiel's vision, who had the writer's ink-horn by his side, were commissioned to go through the midst of this house, and set a mark upon the forehead of every man, who sighs and cries for all the abominations that are done in our land, and in the world, and for the awful consequences of that

final judgment which is appointed and hastening on—how many of us would receive this token and pledge of safety for the last day? And yet, compared with the terrors and woes of that day, how trifling are the Babylonish captivity of the Jews, to the calamities that may befall any branch of the visible Church, or, indeed, any or all of the events which occur in time!

To the few, then, whose consciences testify, that they have this seal of the Spirit, we would say: Yield not to despair. Whatever else may fail, believe God, that it shall be as he hath said, and that your spiritual and eternal life shall be given you for a prey. Be confident of this very thing, that he abideth faithful, though you believe not. And, while you wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus to publicly recognize the mark which he hath already secretly put upon your soul, he will grant you, as one of his mourners, the comfort of his sympathy, the consciousness that he weeps with you. Oh! this is a blessed return, even here on earth, for those who sow in tears. While they wait for the final and full harvest, they yet as an earnest reap with rejoicing these rich sheaves.

But when the vision of our prophet is thus accommodated to the Judgment-Day, the six men with slaughter weapons in their hands, must be supposed to represent those angels of the Son of Man, whom he shall then send forth; and who shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Oh! on that day, how signal will be the woes of those professed people of God, who were indifferent to that other gos-

pel which is preached, and to the consequent sin and spiritual misery which abound! Let such now tremble and repent, as they hear the future injunction of the King to the ministers of his wrath: "Begin at my sanctuary."

But in conclusion,—is it so, that the time is coming "when judgment shall begin at the house of God? And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?" Oh! that all of us, fellow-travellers to the judgment-seat of Christ, might now begin to sigh and cry on account of sin; and be led with weeping and supplications, to the feet of him, who taketh it away! Then, indeed, should we experience the blessing of those who mourn,—we should "be comforted." We would be sealed with the Spirit's mark. The earnest of redemption would be ours. And God would hereafter receive us to himself, and wipe away all our tears.

## SERMON XXX.

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### THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

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Jeremiah xxiii. 6.

“THIS IS THE NAME WHEREBY HE SHALL BE CALLED, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

OUR fallen race, are more indebted to our Saviour, Jesus Christ, than we know, or are ingenuously disposed to feel and own. The most scriptural and spiritual mind among men is but little aware of the extent of our obligations to our incarnate God. They will never be wholly revealed to our finite souls, but will be unfolding themselves throughout unending ages. Oh! ye, to whom Jesus is not the one altogether lovely, briefly consider how thoughtless and ungrateful you have been. And to this end, raise scripturally high your conceptions of the purity and righteousness of God. Immaculate, before whom angels and archangels veil, and cry holy; in whose sight the heavens are not clean; to whose eyes the thought of foolishness is sin; who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity; whose righteousness hath no communion with unrighteousness, who will by no means clear the guilty; whose judgment of a long time lingereth not; who is a consuming fire to the sinner's soul. Now, fellow-

man, summon thy soul, though it be the first time that it hath been ever tried for one moment, even now, before the bar of conscience, and let secret memory, and present feeling be the witnesses; and do you not plead guilty in the sight of this heart-searching, re-trying God? Now, ask thyself, why is it that I feel not the mighty wrath of this holy God? Look now (with no censorious but sympathizing feeling), upon thy neighbor, in whom, however upright may have been his course compared with other men, you have yet observed some imperfection, and who, if honest, would accuse himself of as much and heinous secret sin as you know in the recesses of your bosom, yourself to be guilty of, and say, wherefore is he blessed?

Call to mind some scene or place in which sinners meet to drink and game, to steal or murder, to curse or lie, to pollute the Sabbath of the Lord, to incite and help each other unto sin in any of its many shapes, and say, why doth God forbear to strike? In one comprehensive view embrace the world,—the whole flesh of which has corrupted itself,—remember the many instances of extortion, injustice, deceit, revenge, malignity, hypocrisy, which you may personally have known, or of which history tells, and the more numberless still which eternity will alone unveil, and say, why is the Lord still loving to every man, and why doth he so kindly uphold the earth in his everlasting arms? Why is the earth so full of the mercy of the Lord? How do mercy and truth thus meet together? How may righteousness and peace thus kiss each other? Ah! faithless fellow-man, the reason why you and all flesh are reprieved, lieth not in thee or

thine, but in Jesus, who is called "The Lord our righteousness." It is he, the condescending incarnate Son of God, who hath interposed his body, and been pierced with the spear of the just avenger. It is Jesus, who, with his own robe of righteousness hath mantled the earth, reflecting to heaven an image, bright as the original, and under its shadow protecting sinful flesh from the burning heat of the holiness of God. It is Jesus, who, while he is thus, in our probationary state, an overshadowing cloud to the whole earth, protecting it from the rays of avenging justice, being the propitiation for the sins of all,—doth offer each for himself a robe of righteousness, and hath called each of us poor naked sinners thus to be clothed upon: that when his earth-encircling canopy of grace shall be cleft in twain, and the Lord descend again in glorious majesty to judge and slay the world, his followers may be found with the accepted plea, with the impenetrable shield of the righteousness of God in Christ.

"His name shall be called the Lord our righteousness." Surely in Jesus, dear brethren, must abound the righteousness which God requires, thus to suffice for the whole world of sinful flesh! How may we raise in your minds, ye who have never dwelt in your thoughts and affections, much on the righteousness of Christ, some idea of its excellence and extent? If angels fail, and desire to look into this deep thing, how much more shall we, who, in our natures are lower than the angels, and who are blind through sin, come short! With what grateful adoration should we look on Jesus, when the holy God accepts, approves and lauds his work! "For he received from God the

Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." "Unto the Son he saith,—Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom: thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." God the Father is love, and doth admire love. How then did he approve the "mind which was in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God," and who, when there was no eye to pity and no arm to save all flesh which had corrupted itself, and when the Father looked for some mighty righteous one who should be compassionate for dying man, said quickly, "I delight to do thy will, O God," who "was made in the likeness of sinful flesh; and for sin condemned sin in the flesh;" who consented to be "made sin for us, though he knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

And now, look as we may, at the mysterious person of the incarnate Son, while working out a righteousness with which to clothe the world, how are we struck with its sufficient, boundless, magnitude and worth! Here, first, is the *man* Christ Jesus, meriting by works the unclouded presence, and the unmixed-blessing of his God—yet consenting to be more destitute than the birds of the air which have nests, and than the foxes which have holes, yea, to be a worm and no man, despised of men and rejected of the people: delighting still to do the Father's will! But here, have we, considering Jesus simply as a man, only

*creature* righteousness, the most perfect, it is true, in any world, obeying and deserving, while destitute and forsaken—yet here have we Jesus only as a *man*. But though this be the most perfect righteousness, which the Godhead could conceive of as existing in its handy work, or which personal union with God, never to be dissolved, could enable any creature to effect, yet have we not a righteousness which justifies God in justifying the ungodly. “His name shall be called,” not the man “our righteousness,” but “the *Lord* our righteousness.” On the merits of his *divine* nature was grounded the plea of Jesus, for the acceptance of that work, which he performed to purge our sins. It was *that* nature, which, in its holiness, has been the great object of admiration and of praise to all that have lived godly upon the earth, from the time of Adam until now—which has caused all saints, while weeping over, and repenting of their own unnumbered shortcomings, to lift up their minds in wonder, and exclaim with David, “but Thou continuest holy, O Thou worship of Israel;” and with Daniel, “righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of face,”—it was, brethren, that nature which presented its righteousness as a substitute for man’s.—But what is time, with its cycles of centuries, compared with the eternity which passed before? If we regard God in his holiness, as changing not, only during *time*, we compute but a brief hour of his goodness, when unnumbered years precede. Yea, it was that nature of the person of “the Lord our righteousness,” which, throughout an eternity, as long as that which is to come, had been clothed with the beauty of a holiness,

that was without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing—it was that nature, which brought the worth of its righteous character, infinite in past duration, filling, swaying, and beautifying divine attributes and affections, and presented it in the stead of the world's, to God. Yea, it was that nature, the praise of which, is shortcoming and degrading, when we simply hold it up as having been everlasting in its holiness, or when we conceive of it as aught else than absolutely *unchangeable* in its kind,—which characterizes and magnifies Jesus as the Redeemer of our race. Possessed of this nature, our Lord emptied himself of its claims and glories, and was clothed in flesh to work out righteousness for us. And we fearlessly appeal, even to the common sense of man, and say, that while with such humility and self-denial as God only could endure and display,—for the Father to forsake his co-equal, compassionate and incarnate Son, and to inflict the deserved pain of sin on Christ, was greater expression of his hatred against sin, than if “hell had enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure; and the glory and multitude and pomp of us who rejoiced in iniquity had descended into it.” And to endure the holy Father's wrath against sin, in a nature far above every law and penalty, and with merits such as Christ's, sustained the law and made it honorable, though the sins of a creature world were remitted. For to obey, while enduring such undeserved deep suffering as Christ's, presented a sacrifice of righteousness more worthy of the Father's acceptance, than Adam and his children, if they had never fallen, could have offered unto God. Wherefore, hell may be escaped

and heaven obtained, by sinful souls, through the sufferings and merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Yes, "God may be just, and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." "Grace may reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." "By the obedience of this One shall many be made righteous." And, finally, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

Brethren, as we see from these citations, in magnifying this great truth beyond comparison or degree, we have a scriptural example. Paul was no timid preacher. His was no half-way faith, whatever may be true of some of his successors on this subject; neither was he mad, but spoke forth the words of truth and soberness, even as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. His was an experience which made him duly sensible of the power and extent of sin, and made him cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He too was privileged, through Jesus Christ his Lord, to overcome, and for it he thanked God; and the fortress of the high fort of the walls of his pride and self-righteousness he desired to bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust. He had no confidence in the flesh: though he might also have had confidence in the flesh. If any other man

thinketh that he might rest in the flesh,—*Paul* “more.” “Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” Surely, if any other man might desire, on the great day of trial, to be found in any degree in himself, and to be clothed, at least in part, somewhat, or it may be in some limited or modified sense, with his own righteousness,—*Paul* “more.” Yet, what saith he? Why, that he suffered the loss of all things, stripped himself of every filthy rag of his righteousness, and came, in his own estimation and feeling, as he was in fact, a naked sinner, “to win Christ, and to be found in him; not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” And there was too much peace and joy, aye, and sanctification too, in believing, and there was too much gratitude to Jesus for the inestimable blessings conferred by his merits and precious blood-shedding, for Paul to glory in aught else than in the cross of Christ.

All this was a characteristic of this Apostle’s individual calling and personal Christianity. And, as regards his mode of proclaiming the glorious gospel of the grace of God which was committed unto him, he had so utterly abolished the whole body of self and pride, that he preached not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord. He knew nothing among men, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Neither would he allow any other gospel to be preached; knowing that no other foundation could be laid than

was laid, which was Jesus Christ. He hesitated not to curse himself, his fellow-apostles, and even an angel from heaven, or all and any else who, whether from ignorance, or unconscious personal pride, or from fear of offending the ungodly self-sufficiency of the Pharisee, or the unrenewed, should preach another Gospel than that which had been preached. They of the circumcision which believed, might be astonished, and doubt whereto this might grow; nay, they that were of the circumcision might contend. But doth Paul seek to please men? For if he yet pleased men, he should not be the servant of Christ.

The gospel which was preached of him was not after man; for he neither received it of man, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. And so blessed and effectual had been its working in the Apostle's own soul, to the banishment of doubt and disorder, and all the awful consequences of self-dependence and sufficiency, and to the dispensing of an authorized and full, and satisfying peace and hope, that when he saw those to whom he ministered, unconsciously serving that hard task-master the law, to their own most inconceivably grievous suffering, and to the most unworthy robbing of his rightful glory of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, he held up before their eyes him, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and reminded them earnestly that they were complete in him, in whom also we are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ; who, while we were dead, hath quickened us together with him, and hav-

ing forgiven all trespasses, hath blotted out the handwriting of ordinances which was against us, which was contrary to us, and hath taken it out of the way, *nailing it to his cross*; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he hath made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. With the truth of the Christian's glorious calling unto liberty, so awfully severe to pride, but so fully consoling to self-emptiness, deeply impressed on his own heart, and strikingly prominent in his ministry of the Word, doth the Apostle call on believers to rejoice in the Lord, saying, "Rejoice evermore, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us;" "wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do."

Having thus shown that the righteousness of Christ meets all our wants before God's bar, and that we are sustained by an inspired preacher, in unceasingly insisting on this truth, we ask, what is its worth—what are its uses in the believer's case?

And now, self-loathing Christian brethren, who, made conscious of your nakedness, have heard the counsel of Christ, and have bought of him, without money and without price, "white raiment, that ye may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness might not appear"—as ye walk with Jesus, with what white and glistening garments, "so as no fuller on earth can white them"—with what glorious apparel are ye clad! Hath not the Father called the Son "the Lord our Righteousness?" This is his baptismal name; this the

nature and the essence of his disclosure of himself to us, and of our connection with the Lord; he is the believer's righteousness.

But, behold, I show you a further mystery. If, in one aspect, Christ is thus the believer; so, in another, is the believer Christ. Oh! surely our prophet, who spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, went not too far, when he calls Jerusalem, which is the Church of the living God, dwelling safely under the shadow of "that Branch of righteousness, which should grow up unto David," when he calls her "the Lord our righteousness." Yea, brethren, in the estimation of God, in Scripture, and in fact, the most perfect mutual substitution occurs between Jesus and his true invisible church. "This is the name wherewith she shall be called," declares Jeremiah, "the Lord our righteousness." Decked by Christ's gracious hand, with His own spotless royal robe, the true Church is to reign with Christ, she is to be treated as the Lord himself, nay, the inspired prophet, as we see, hesitates not to denominate her as "the Lord." How glorious, then, is the Church, the Bride! "Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah; comely as Jerusalem; terrible as an army with banners." How radiant with the glory of a divine righteousness is the Church, the "spiritual house" of the living God, partaking of the preciousness of her own living corner-stone, which is chosen of God. And if this be true of the whole spiritual house, it is so of the house in its every part, of each "lively stone" of which the house is built. If the whole "body of Christ" be "glorified," and "glistening," so each member thereof partakes of the nature of the whole; and, though it will

not be so to the eye of sense until Jesus shall appear, and we shall be like him, yet in truth it is so now, and so it is seen by the eye of faith.

Then, fellow-believer, let faith and truth conquer sense and appearance of falsehood, and appropriate to yourself the righteous life of God's dear Son. How righteous are you, beloved, who dwell in Christ, and are clothed with Him, in whom He dwells, and not only whose sinful blackness is washed clean by His blood, but whose creature dimness is made bright with His glory! How perfect in Christ Jesus do you stand! His righteousness is given you. By this, His free gift, it becomes yours. All His righteous acts are reckoned yours. Though you personally performed them not, yet, by His gift, you are personally possessed of them. All that Jesus did, you may have. You may refuse to mix faith with what you hear, you may be even surprised at being thus addressed; but, Christian soul, though poor, tempted, yielding, despondent in yourself, yet as incorporated in Christ, how faithfully hast thou withstood the devil in the wilderness and overcome! Surely you may face the fierce accuser on the final day, when you have already repelled him in the wilderness, and forced him to leave the field. How uncompromising is your spirit of holiness, that you not only love righteousness and hate iniquity in self, and rebuke sin in those who refuse to follow with you, but cannot endure it in the zealous Peter! How dost thou spend thy life in doing good, healing the sick, the blind, the deaf, the lame, raising the dead, and preaching the Gospel to the poor! How long are thy fasts—forty days and forty nights! How con-

tinued are thy prayers, throughout the night; and how earnest, too—sweating great drops of blood! How dost thou love the brethren, bearing with their ignorance and sins, enlightening and edifying them in the most holy faith—praying more earnestly for them than for the world, that they may be kept from the evil! How resigned to deep suffering—feeling and saying, “Father, not my will, but thine be done!” Above all, how meek wast thou in the judgment-hall; how forgiving on the cross—dying for the salvation of thy murderers, and praying, “Father, forgive them; they know not what they do!” Such is your righteousness; and who may say it is not heavenly, nay, divine? How glorious is your righteousness! how blessed are you in your Divine character! With what heavenly benignity doth such perfection fill thy soul! With what joy do you rejoice in the Lord your righteousness!

With searching look, I seek,—but little or no such joy is seen; and may we not charitably fear it is not felt? If there be any, who, while they have not the righteousness of Christ, mourn not after a godly sort, on account of their spiritual destitution, and as the deserted spouse give no sleep to their eyes, nor slumber to their eyelids, seeking and calling for their Beloved, the chiefest among ten thousand, who is altogether lovely; we have nothing now to do with such, save to say, you have either left your first love, or whatever name you have, or whatever other hope you may lawfully possess, you have no part or lot in Christ, but are in the gall of bitterness, and under the bonds of iniquity. But, if there be any here

who mourn because of their unsatisfied hunger, and thirst after a full and conscious possession of this righteousness, ill would it become even a glorified saint, whose tears are wiped away, to forget the rock whence he was hewn, or the hole of the pit whence he was digged, and thus abruptly and harshly to pass you by,—and much less a miserable mourner like yourself; and, further still, where Jesus hath pronounced you blessed, and said you shall be filled. But, oh! with a hearing ear and with an understanding heart, give heed! Wish for no unauthorized quarter from a fellow-worm, lest on you and him consuming wrath descend; but gladly accede to our gracious Master's terms. How often has your spirit sunk, and you in secret mourned, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?"

Afflicted, mourning soul, God "hath not appointed you to this, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Put now thy trust in God; and thou shalt yet praise him, who is the health of thy countenance and thy God." What aileth thee, O soul? Discontented with thy present earthly condition? Denied, thwarted, bereaved, deceived, poor, solitary, or crossed in any temporal way? Beware, beware, if thou yieldest much to griefs like this, and learnest not soon in whatsoever state thou art, therewith to be content,—this will prove but the first stage of a protracted and more awful suffering. It is more profitable for thee to cut off a right hand, to pluck out a right eye, than that thy whole body should be cast into hell-fire. Be careful for nothing. Utterly slay and spare not, every wish or murmur, which riseth up in opposition

to the will of Christ, which is your present state,—and only groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with the righteousness of Christ. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Prize, above all, “the Lord, your righteousness;” and other objects, only as you, with prayer and self-denial, think they will tend to the fuller possession and enjoyment of him.

But doth strong-besetting-sin, and galling slavery to Satan cause you to go mourning all your days; and is deliverance your dearest wish, your highest aim? Now, in one sense, poverty of spirit is a prerequisite to Gospel faith,—it is useless to clothe the warm, to fill the full,—you must be stripped of all your filthy rags, ere you will or can buy of Christ the white raiment of his righteousness. Need no further lesson; but be taught by the past your utter nakedness. Most utterly destroy all self-conceit. Loathe all praise of men. Be unwilling to be esteemed possessed of any personal goodness. And while you outwardly reject this bait of Satan, hide it not under the tongue, do not secretly keep it still within thy mouth. Further still, mourn over, and acknowledge the defect even of your faith in Christ; almost fear that you will soil or lose his unspotted robe of righteousness. Be poor in spirit, naked in soul,—and you shall be enriched and clothed with “the Lord your righteousness.”—Thus clad, your jealous Lord will not be so jealous of yourself, whom you before idolized,—and will not be provoked to show you so painfully the insufficiency and sinfulness of your forsaken idol, self. Trampling on self, and trusting in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, he will prove your

shield, ward off darts, and cause you to triumph in the Lord your righteousness. With what strong cords of gratitude and love will you then be bound to the Lord your righteousness? And if, as must needs be, offences come, what godly sorrow, and repentance will they straightway work,—what carefulness, yea, what clearing of yourself, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things you will labor to approve yourself to be clear.

Now, how great and high are the possible attainments of those, who are thus armed and clothed upon, we say not,—let each make trial for himself. This much we know, that when we are weak, then are we strong. And that Scriptural saints, who were clothed from head to foot only with the righteousness of Christ, and who acted in this faith, making it outwardly appear, that they inwardly gave not to themselves but to Jesus Christ, the entire praise, soared much higher than the groveling, proud, self-righteous Pharisee.

How did the power of Christ rest upon the first martyr, Stephen, whose faith in Jesus was single and strong! With what humble confidence did this saint, with his bruised body weltering in blood, commend his departing spirit to the Lord Jesus' care! How much more did he love his murderous enemies than himself,—making his last prayer for them: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." How prevalent his prayer, when the young persecutor, injurious Saul, at whose feet lay the dying martyr's clothes, and who was consenting to his death, had first shown forth in him the long-suffering of God, and became a chosen

vessel unto Christ, to bear his name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel! O mourning and aspiring saint, rejoice in the Lord, thy righteousness! Thus will you go on from strength to strength, thus will you be changed into the image of the glory of the Lord, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Thus will you exalt and glorify the Lord. Thus will your treasure be above, and your affections be set where Jesus sitteth at the right hand of God. Thither will your wishes and your thoughts ascend and dwell, where is no lie, no sin, no curse, where you will be perfect in the Lord your righteousness. Always willing rather to depart and be with Christ, which is far better,—thy heart shall not be made sick by hope deferred,—the Lord thy righteousness shall come, he will not tarry. The Shepherd will take thee to himself, where he will lead thee into green pastures, and beside the still waters, where,

“ You will range the sweet plains on the banks of the river,  
And sing of salvation forever and ever.”

And now, what shall we say to thee, O man, proud and self-sufficient, who, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish thine own righteousness, hast not submitted thyself to the righteousness of God? We say to you, professor, or non-professor, so long as thou art not a possessor of the Lord our righteousness,—if thou dost not heartily embrace and clothe thyself with the Lord our righteousness, but dost wonder and despise,—thou shalt perish.

And now, O proud, wicked man, if thou dost die in thine iniquity, I have delivered my soul. Thou hast heard the sound of the trumpet, and didst not take warning,—thy blood be upon thine own head.

But is there one soul here, who, though he may heretofore have felt that he “was rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing,” now begins to fear that he is “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;” and as he hath heard the counsel of Jesus, “the Lord our righteousness,”—“to buy of him gold tried in the fire, that he may be rich; and white raiment, that he may be clothed, and that the shame of his nakedness do not appear; and to anoint his eyes with eye-salve, that he may see,”—is almost persuaded to throw off his filthy rags, and put on the glorious apparel of “the Lord our righteousness?”

O soul, soul! what wouldst thou think of yon proud poor-man, whose miserably open hut is unable to shield him from the winter’s storm, and who yet refuses to enter in and occupy the close and well-provided house which you have built? How would you regard that starving, naked man, who should refuse to sit down at your well-furnished board, and from your full wardrobe to clothe himself? How then doth doubt and hesitation seem in thee, poor, sinful soul, when Jesus, with his righteousness, would gladly cover all thy sins? Doth it not rather become thee to beg, to pray? Nay; this thou must bring thyself earnestly to do, or never gain. He is found only by those, who seek for him with all their heart. All that he doth demand is unreserved faith and trust in him, his righteousness, atonement, all-sufficiency. Dost thou feel the desire

for this faith and trust,—it is his Spirit prompts,—now cleave to Christ,—his spirit then hath crowned the work; his grace hath clothed thee with his robe of righteousness. And dost thou weep for past sin, or present joy? His love will wipe away thy tears, or make them sweet; and cause thee to rejoice in “the Lord, thy righteousness.” Dost thou believe; or dost thou turn away?

“Ashamed of Jesus! that dear friend  
On whom my hopes of heaven depend.  
No, when I blush, be this my shame,  
That I no more revere his name.

Ashamed of Jesus! empty pride;  
I'll boast a Saviour crucified;  
And O, may this my portion be,  
My Saviour, not ashamed of me.”

THE END.









